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The revelation of God in his
word, shown in a graphic









THE
REVELATION OF GOD
IN
HIS WORD;
SHOWN IN A GRAPHIC DELINEATION
OF
HOLY SCRIPTURE
FOR ITS FRIENDS AND ENEMIES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

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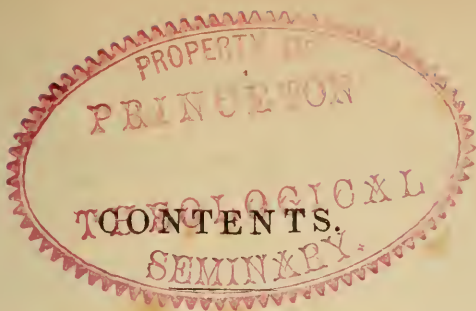
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THIS is an interesting and valuable work. Like the Bible, it is adapted for the learned and unlearned; and, with the imparting of sound knowledge, combines the inculcation of religious and moral sentiment. The Author's Preface mentions certain uses which the work is calculated to serve, in addition to which it will confer important benefits on students of theology, teachers in Sabbath schools, and intelligent private Christians; it is a key which opens up the Scriptures, yet does not supersede reflection; but, as Dr. Gess observes, continually refers the reader to the Bible itself.

The Translator would acknowledge the great obligation he is under to Dr. Davidson, the learned Professor of Biblical Criticism in the College of Belfast, who revised the translation, and made many important corrections and amendments.



PREFACE.

THAT the diligent reading of the Holy Scriptures is among the most important duties of the evangelical Christian, and a most efficacious means of instruction, is not more generally acknowledged, than that this object must be unaccomplished to the larger number of Bible readers, unless they be furnished with helps peculiarly adapted to throw light on the Scriptures. In such our time, in particular, is not wanting. We possess many, in part excellent books, in which, what is best worth knowing relative to the Holy Scriptures, is prepared for general use from the stock of sacred learning, so that volumes contain explanations of the more difficult places of the Bible, volumes again have been given of instruction on the Bible in all its extent, on the design, the occasion, and contents of the particular books; on the most memorable portions of the history and doctrine which they contain; on the character of the principal persons; on the occasional dark parts; in like manner, on the divine plan which manifests itself through the whole. Now, when the author has undertaken to furnish a new book of the latter kind, he can scarce believe that he requires to

make any apology. His plan is in many respects different from the other works of the kind extant. He would publish a book which, through its cheapness, might possibly have a wide circulation, which, instead of fatiguing the reader by its excessive length, might rather direct from itself to the Holy Scripture, which, with this brevity unites the greatest possible fulness; that would be adapted for the family as well as the school, which might dissipate many widely extended prejudices against the Bible, remove many misconceptions, and lead us to pay due honour in it to one of the highest gifts of God to men. Besides, in the department of theological literature, the stock is truly inexhaustible, and is receiving accessions every year, and almost every year brings with it important materials for such as are not divines, which it is necessary, or at least desirable, that they should know. Competent judges perhaps will give the author credit for having used diligently the newest literature, in order to the completion of his design, and also for having thoroughly examined the existing materials of the present time. Amongst these the author has to refer principally to two subjects.

Scarcely half a year has passed away since, from the theological lecture room, it has been proclaimed anew to the public, with greater definiteness and extent than before, that the credibility of our gospels does not rest on a sure foundation, and that the account they give of Jesus is rather a web of tales than express history. It was therefore necessary to handle this matter with particular care, and to furnish the reader with principles, by which he might satisfy himself as to the groundlessness of such an assertion.

Another object of particular importance to the present time, is the Revelation of John. Many Christians, particularly in the native country of the author, are acquainted only with the exposition of J. A. Bengel, a most excellent interpreter of Scripture, whose Gnomes might be adduced now anew in proof of its peculiar usefulness, after it has conducted a full century to the spread of practical Scripture knowledge to an incalculable amount. Now, as Bengel had calculated the commencement of the Millenium to happen the present year 1836, so nothing else is to be expected than that many scoffs will be poured out upon his book, and the cry will go forth, that the result itself has punished self-deceit. Nevertheless, the book itself has not been contradicted, but only one of its innumerable explanations, and this only in one point, namely, in a computation of time. Against these, as well as to enlighten the mind of many well-meaning Christians, who are liable to go astray, in the book, the author would make it plain that the work contains eternal truths. This has been done in the simplest manner, by placing the fundamental ideas it contains in juxtaposition with the other references of the New Testament.

Now, since the plan of the whole forbade a too extended treatment of these two objects, hence no misconception could arise as to the proper mode of treating the other books of Scripture, so this very plan of the whole, and its connection with the different books of the Bible, permitted him, as already remarked upon, to pass over in silence many parts.

Among the many different views which prevail concerning the Bible, in whole and in part, a popular

book thereon may be very properly looked for containing a definite mode of instruction, and following it out consistently. The reader would observe, that the present book follows neither the trifling Allegorical view, nor a suspecting Naturalism, nor a weakly defending Rationalism; its defence often giving up the best parts of the Bible, but a Supernaturalism, which finds the divine so undeniably set forth in the most important developments of the Biblical History, that he repositeth thereon, though at present he may not have attained to a fulness of light on all the particulars.

That the book will be introduced into the school, of course only into the upper classes of the higher schools, is the wish and design of the author. He has tried a portion of it in the school in this way already. To go through the range of the whole book, indeed, with children, might fatigue. But it appears to be most important to instruction in reading the Bible, at the commencement of each particular book, first to read the section relating thereto, and then to be questioned, whereby the portions of the Bible taught could be opened up. By this means Scripture reading would not only have a new zest, the attention of the children be awakened and reconciled to reading, but occasion would be given to recover other biblical narratives that have been lost, in the lower classes, and to delineate the whole history of the Bible as the development of a grand plan of Deity. The latter manifests, besides, the exact teaching of the Holy Scriptures, a principal duty in relation to the upper classes. Indeed, the book has in it many things too high for the school, as the author designed it for more than schools, the

intelligent teacher may pass over these portions, or only glance at them.

The author has also to speak of the peculiarity of the work. He laid the foundation of it eleven years ago, on the occasion of a prize question by the Evangelical Society, and though it did not then obtain the prize, yet it called forth strong expressions of approval. Since this time, the manuscript never lay idle in the desk, but received continual enlargements, and quotations from different authors. The latter gradually became so numerous that the author for a short time remained undetermined, whether it would not be better to leave off altogether the retouching of the manuscript, and instead of it to set forth gleanings out of his collection, under some such title as the following:—Enlightened Views of Pious Christians and Deep Thinkers on the History and Doctrines of the Bible. He soon felt satisfied, however, that such a collection would be deficient in unity of thought and style, and that, whilst on some particulars it might have greater copiousness, yet as a whole it would be wanting in completeness. But he could not deny himself to embody in his work some at least of the most excellent and distinguished portions, without the names of their authors. And this he has done, with especial fulness, in the two important subjects before mentioned. The reader would do well to consider that writings such as this, do not belong to those breaking up a path leading to new discoveries, but have attained their object when the most important observations have been collected and put together, by the exercise of an independent judgment.

May the Lord of the Church, who hath given us his holy word, put his blessing upon this weak labour, that it may incite to the reading of his precious word, facilitate the consideration of it, and contribute to the acceptance of the same in a willing believing heart.

THE AUTHOR.

BEUTLINGEN,
16th *January*, 1836.

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
THE
THEOLOGICAL
REVELATION OF GOD

IN

HIS WORD, &c.

BIBLE SOCIETIES.

A GREAT work has taken place in our day, which demands the joyful sympathy of every Christian. Numberless reverers of God and his word, in many lands, and of different languages, separated partially, viewed as composing Churches, yet all united by faith and love, have formed themselves into societies to circulate the Bible among the lower classes, and in foreign lands. This brings together the rich and the poor; the rich to contribute of his overflowing riches,—the poor a mite from his poverty, and both feel it is better to give than receive. From every quarter comes the glad tidings, that the Word of God circulates to the glory of its divine Author, Psalm cxlvii. 15. 2 Thess. iii. 1. In the short period of thirty years this society has exceeded all expectation; and in this is a proof that the cause is in accordance with the Divine will. Acts v. 38, 39.

The year 1803 was the blessed year in which the first society of this nature originated in England; and, so powerful was the example it gave, that the measure of imitation has been in proportion of more than a thousand fold. Many millions of Bibles have been circulated since that time, in part gratuitously, and partly at a small price, and thereby new zeal has been called forth among those who long had this divine gift in their houses. They have been stirred up, besides, to read

the Bible with a true estimate of its high value. Into one hundred and fifty of the five hundred languages which exist, it has been translated either in whole or in part; in many languages it is the first and only book. Just as in times of Reformation, a hungering is awakened after the Word of God, and well is it for us that we can satisfy it. Amos viii. 11, 12.

As then the pious Dr. Bugenhagen, pastor at Wittenburg, yearly solemnized in his house a festival on account of the translation of the Bible, and with his children and friends, thanked God for this gift, so now we hear of societies forming every where, to celebrate by a festival the spreading abroad of the Holy Scriptures.

The Word of God remains among us in more abundant fulness. How fortunate is our time when compared with former periods. Before the art of printing was found out, one copy of the Holy Scriptures, and in Latin, cost five hundred crowns, a sum at that time scarcely attainable;—few only of the learned understood it and could use it. At one time a large portion of Christians did not know there was a Bible, and they were sunk in the most deplorable ignorance.

Have we better means than they had,—so God will require of us in proportion. It is not enough that we possess the Word of God; we must read it through devoutly, and ponder upon it, so as to make it our own. How should he have love to Christ who will not receive his declaration? John v. 39. We should search after the manifestations of God in his works, and in the human heart; but who would not seek to know him where he hath manifested himself in the clearest manner,—through him whom he hath sent, his only begotten Son. It is the testimony of the apostles, that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, in righteousness, and can make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. And when heaven and earth shall have passed away, the Word of God will endure for ever. Matt. v. 18.

LUTHER'S TRANSLATION.

THE German edition of the Bible, which in our native country has justly been preferred to all others, originated with Dr. Martin Luther, and is now somewhat about three hundred years old. As he himself, by his converse with the Sacred writings, had arrived at the knowledge of the truth, so he considered it essential, in order to the grounding and confirming purer conceptions of religious doctrine, that the Word of God should be put into the hands of the people. In the year 1521, at Wartburg, his Patmos,—he began with his translation of the New Testament, which he finished also in the following year. Then he published portions of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, one after the other,—namely, 1523, the Five Books of Moses,—1524, the Book of Joshua, and the other historical books, together with Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon,—1526, The prophets Jonah and Habbakuk,—1528, the Prophecies of Zachariah and Isaiah,—1529, The Book of Wisdom,—1530, Daniel, and the remaining Apocryphal Books,—1532, the remaining Prophets. The whole Bible then appeared first in 1534. Even, indeed, before the time of Luther, not less than fourteen German translations had appeared, but they were only made out of the early Latin translation, and were in many respects incorrect, unintelligible, and un-German. Luther, on the contrary, made use, it is true, of the Latin translation, but he took the Hebrew—his foundation for the Old Testament; and for the New—the Greek original; and therefore he translated more exactly and correctly. By the general approbation and extraordinary sale which this Bible met with, new editions were soon necessary, and Luther, so far from holding his edition faultless, took advantage of this circumstance in order to make many improvements, in which he received much assistance at the hands of learned friends. Matthesius records of this,—“He,

Dr. Martin Luther, had appointed something like a particular Sanhedrim of the best people at that time within his reach, who weekly assembled at the doctor's cloister some hours before supper, namely, Dr. John Bugenhagen, Dr. Justus Jonas, Dr. Creuzeger. Mr. Philips, Matthew Aurogallus, Dr. George Rohrer was corrector on the occasion. Now, when Luther had once looked over the Bibles published, and made inquiries of Jews and foreign philologists, and had asked the old Germans concerning good words: So he came into the consistory with his old Latin and new German Bible. He had the Hebrew text also constantly there. Mr. Philips brought with him the Greek text,—Dr. Creuzeger the Hebrew and Chaldee Bible. Besides, the professors had their Rabbins with them. Dr. Pomer (Bugenhagen of Pommerania), had also a Latin text before him, wherein he was much versant,—each had prepared himself beforehand on a passage whereon they should deliberate; then the president proposed a text, and he put it to them in order, and heard what each had to say, according to the nature of the language, or according to the exposition of the old pastors.”

The measure of assiduity and trouble Luther took with his work, the following portions out of his writings may prove:—In an epistle concerning the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, he said, “In interpretation I have made the resolution to give pure and plain German; and it has often indeed happened to us that we have for fourteen days, for three or four weeks, sought for a particular word, and notwithstanding did not sometimes find it. On Job we also laboured,—Mr. Philip, Aurogallus, and I, and sometimes in four days we scarcely composed three lines. This I can say, with a good conscience, that I have bestowed upon it my utmost faithfulness and diligence.”

Of the Prophets he hath written, “Now we labour on the Prophets. Oh God! how great and perplexing a thing it is to constrain the Hebrew writers to speak German! how they struggle, and would rather not give

up their Hebrew manner." "Suppose a person now runs over three or four pages with his eye, and never once stumbles, but does not perceive how many clods are laid on the place which he now goes over as a plained board, but we must sweat and toil before being able to remove such clods out of the way, and go on freely,—it is good to plough when the field has been made clean, but to root out wood and trunks, and to prepare the field, then no one is willing."

Such was his exactness, that he caused a butcher to cut off particular tufts before his eyes, and got him to give names to single parts, that he might be able to apply the exact words when explaining the laws relating to sacrifice. He also inquired in letters after the names of precious stones, and matter pertaining to natural history, which were mentioned in the Bible, and tried to procure such from the cabinets of the curious, though in his day philology was not so far advanced as at present; nevertheless his translation, by its simplicity, dignity, power, and pithy sentences, holds the precedence over all that have succeeded, in tolerable abundance. Kuster has said very properly, in "Luther's translation the German tongue has been unfolded in all its peculiar power and softness, and all the German poets and orators whose names claim immortality, would not have attained unto a high and splendid station, had not Luther in his translation broken up the way for them. Every thing by which the German tongue has been remarkable for three centuries after him,—the multiplicity of its applications, its fulness of expression, the power and beauty of its tones,—all these Luther's translation united in itself."

This was the centre from which the German people drew in streams, light and consolation,—and it was besides the firmest anchor of the Reformation, as through the medium of it each one might be satisfied as to the accordance of the evangelical doctrine with the Word of God.

AGE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

THE Holy Scripture is, even on account of its great antiquity, a venerable book. The first books of the Bible are older than all other books which have come down from ancient times. The single parts of it were composed at different times in the course of one thousand six hundred years. The oldest, viz., the books of Moses, appeared above one thousand five hundred years before the birth of Christ,—and from this period, at different times, up to the year three hundred before the birth of Christ, appeared the other books of the Old Testament. From this date up to the birth of Christ, and perhaps some years later, came forth the books called Apocryphal. In the first century from the birth of Christ, all the portions of the New Testament were composed. The latest book of the Bible is consequently upwards of one thousand seven hundred years old, and the oldest is more than three thousand three hundred years. The original of the Old Testament is in the vernacular tongue of the Jews, *i. e.*, in Hebrew. After the return from the Babylonish captivity the Jews spake the Chaldee tongue, so there are in some of the later books sections in this tongue. The New Testament was all composed in the Greek tongue, which was then generally prevailing.

TONE AND PHRASEOLOGY OF THE SACRED WRITINGS.

THE origin of the Holy Scriptures at so early a period, and their composition in the languages already mentioned, naturally furnish many peculiarities and excellencies. As an example, we may mention particularly the pure childlike tone, in a noble simplicity, which is poured over the biblical narratives. It is not possible to describe more to the life, and (as it were) to the eye, than is done in the Bible. When men of perverted taste cannot understand the phraseology of the Bible,

and miss therein the foolery and false taste of human eloquence ; on the other hand, men of uncorrupted minds, and children in particular, show that they feel the Bible to be altogether irresistible. The historical mode of writing found in the Bible enters into connection even in tone with the facts, so that these stand and live in the description as in nature. Thus every fact finds its own proper tone. The familiar and homely tone in the history of the patriarchs is gentle,—where the doings of the people and their heroes are described, the tone partakes more of the vigorous and solemn. The eye sees throughout a picture full of life, which spreads forth on all sides, doctrine, exhortation, application.

The Hebrew language—so far as we are acquainted with it,—is poor in expressing the earthly relations of man, but is rich and copious in describing the relations in which he stands towards God. On this account it has been called the language of faith, as the Greek tongue has been the language of knowledge. The two united constitute the peculiar manner in which the New Testament is written. The ordinary human language must be elaborated anew, as it were, and consecrated to make it a fit instrument for conveying divine revelation.

We often hear complaints of the Eastern tone of the Bible, and the assertion is put forth,—The Bible, to be intelligible to us, must not only be translated into our vernacular tongue, but also according to our conceptions and ideas. Nothing can be more perverted than this position. Much more should we be guided by the Bible, than it be formed after our views. Much more should we learn from the sayings and thoughts and conceptions of the Bible, than that it should be wrested according to our thoughts and peculiarities of expression. Even in the human sciences, it is acknowledged that he who hath introduced a new doctrine, introduces also a peculiar way of expressing the same. How much more must we consider the mode of expression suitable, which the spirit of God hath chosen.

Most correctly said a pious man, of him who changes the dialect used of God into his own empty conceptions, he changes good gold coin into a base and inferior currency.

THE NAME OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

The name Bible is from the Greek, and signifies a book superior to all the books, or, by way of eminence — *the book*. We find also the name Scripture, Exod. xxxii. 16. John xix. 36, or Holy Scripture, 2 Tim. iii. 15. Rom. i. 2. The Israelites considered their religion as a covenant with God, Exod. xix. 15. Jer. xxxiii. 20. Ps. xxv. 14. Accordingly their Holy Scriptures were called the books of the covenant, 1 Macc. i. 60. Sir. xxv. 33. This covenant, in consideration of the new condition of Christianity, the Apostles called the old covenant, 2 Cor. iii. 14. These writings are also the Scriptures of the old covenant, and hence originated the name for the writings of the Apostles, namely, the books of the new covenant, as Jesus had compared his religion to a covenant, Mark xiv. 24. 1 Cor. xi. 25. The Old and New Testament signify in the language of the Church, the same as the old and new covenant; the concise expression Old Testament or covenant, stands in place of the phrase, the writings of the Old Testament and New Testament, for the writings of the New Testament.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Hitherto the sacred writings have presented themselves to us in two portions, occasioned by the age, the language, and contents of the different parts. These two, the Old and New Testament, admit again of many subdivisions. The Old Testament is principally divided into the canonical or sacred books, and the Apocryphal.

Under the canonical books many divisions have been given; they divided them into the law, the prophets,

and the other writings, *ex. gr.* the Psalms. These three divisions Jesus even recognized, as Luke xxiv. 44.

Whilst he named the last after a book which at that time had the first place in it. At other times they were recognized under the two first portions, Matthew v. 17. And at one time, instead of all the portions, all have been expressed under that which was significant of the first division, John x. 24; xii. 34. 1 Cor. xiv. 21. By the law the Jews understood the five books of Moses. By the prophets they recognized not only the four greater and twelve minor prophets, but also most of the historical books. This has its foundation therein, that the right conception of the will and counsel of God, which the prophets had to declare, could as well present the work of divine power, wisdom, and love, through a representation of the past as through reference to the present and future. The remaining books they joined together in a third portion, under the name of writings, or holy writings. This order is not observed in our German translation; it is rather a more suitable division according to their subject. It is the following:—

1. The historical books, from those of Moses to Esther.
2. The doctrinal books, viz. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.
3. The prophetic books, to which belong the four greater and twelve lesser prophets.

The New Testament also has three classes of writings.

1. The historical, viz. The Gospels and Acts of the Apostles.
2. The Epistles of the Apostles.
3. The Revelation of John.

According to this division would we now proceed to remark in the proper order.

OLD TESTAMENT.

I. CANONICAL WRITINGS.

By the canonical books of the Old Testament, we understand the books which were inspired by the Holy

Spirit. This last believed not only all the Jews, who on that account acknowledged them by using them in their public worship and watched them with anxious care, lest they should be disfigured by human additions ; but also Jesus and the Apostles have confirmed the same in the most unequivocal manner. Jesus has given his testimony to the divine nature of the Mosaic law, Matth. xv. 4. Mark vii. 9. He declared that the old Testament testified concerning him, John v. 39, and that the prophetic parts pointed to him, Matth. xi. 13. Luke xxiv. 25—27, 44, 46. Matth. xxvi. 54, and that no one could interpret them as invalid, v. 17. John x. 34. In like manner also the Apostles judged, Acts iii. 18. 1 Peter i. 10, 12. 2 Peter i. 21. 2 Tim. iii. 16. To these testimonies the contents of the books themselves perfectly correspond. We find in them prophecies of the future more or less distant, whose reality has been confirmed by their complete fulfilment. The promises and threatenings declared by Moses have been fulfilled. The prophets Micah, Hosea, and Amos, predicted the ruin of the kingdom of Israel, and the event justified the prediction. Isaias, Jeremiah, and other prophets, threatened the kingdom of Judah with the captivity at Babylon,—these threatenings did not long remain unfulfilled ; the return from captivity was also predicted,—it came to pass. Jesus himself was prophesied of many years before ; and with his apostles he could appeal to the testimony of the prophets concerning him. Do we read these books with care,—no man speaks and acts in such a manner unless he has a commission from God. Do we suppose the prophets have delivered to us their own peculiar wisdom,—their sayings and doings must appear to us wholly incomprehensible. This very divine commission, this coming in the name of the Lord, is the principal thing in all their declarations ; suppose this commission wanting, and you can only compare them to a body without a soul, a house without a foundation stone. Honour and renown were seldom their portion, but rather persecution, ignominy, and death ; without a divine commission they would not have exposed

themselves to such adversity. Certainly the revelation of God in the New Testament, through his only begotten Son, is much more perfect and clear, and a part of the Mosaic law, the ceremonial, has lost its obligation by Christ, but though only preparatory, it should not be considered as not divine. God let himself down to the sensual mode of thinking and the lower cultivation of an earlier time, and thereby prepared the world for a more perfect revelation of his Son. Though all these books are different in their authors, their contents and age, yet there is manifest in them all the same divine spirit, who united them with one another as members of the same body, and together with the New Testament they form one grand whole.

THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

FIRST DIVISION.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

THE religion of the Old, as well as of the New Testament, rests on history. Hence both have so large historical sections. History, says Herder, is the foundation of religion and the Bible, it is the root and branch of the tree, the doctrines proceed from it as branches, upon which the duties grow as fruits and flowers, and even the books of Moses are full of it. The history of the Israelites, according to Moses's view, is not a dead science, or a mere affair of the memory, but a true concern of the heart, like the recollections of one's own youth. It was designed to be to them an evidence of the being of a God, his providence and goodness, an evidence of the faith of the patriarchs and their blessings. The Bible is not a book of mere instruction, it is not a naked collection of doctrines re-

lating to faith and practice, but of divine instruction, and the communication of those doctrines to men, the condescension of God to their juvenile capacity for knowledge, and from the point of view already mentioned, their progress under continual guidance from above. Many narratives of this history appear altogether valueless in themselves; but, considered from the point of view already mentioned in connection with other parts, we may remark a regular progress of divine leadings, which are always more and more developed, and always come nearer to the highest development. The main end to which they all tend, is the founding, preserving, and extending of faith in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and of corresponding morality. The history of the people, which, in respect of religious knowledge, stands most distinguished among the nations of antiquity, unfolds itself before us in these books from the earliest period, amid various scenes of prosperity and adversity, until the dissolution of their state. It runs through different stages, and in each God is glorified; each gives occasion to a new development of his plan, until the history breaks off and teaches us all the more eagerly to look over into the times of the new covenant, when the preparations had come to their completion. And though we find only the history of a single people, yet the result has taught us that in the divine plan all people are reckoned, to whom salvation should come from the Jews. It is all, however, to be considered as one great work carried forward during thousands of years, and that through the instrumentality of very different men, oft without their having been conscious of it, often contrary to their own will,—but always according to a plan, so that even from it the divine origin of the whole may be easily recognized. A thread, entwined after a divine manner, goes through the whole. The holy Scriptures show themselves as a perfect building, therein is nothing too little, and nothing too much, and all in its own place. It is true, indeed, the Jews had many other historical books besides,

now lost, whose titles occur here and there in the holy Scriptures, but they did not consider them in the light of sacred writings, and for that reason have not received them into their collection ; so much the more excellent must those they did receive have appeared to them, a conclusion which follows of course. Would we consider them indeed merely as a kind of historical almanack, as books which contain a copious civil history, they must appear imperfect, but the design of their authors was another and far different one. Their design was to adduce from well known history, in a connected series, those facts which had reference to religion. History itself is made to stand forth a witness how their forefathers were always happy in a true adherence to religion, whereas, in slighting it, they became miserable by their own guilt.

The pious Israelite also continually considered his history from a religious position, and his religion, from a historical point of view, amid the many prayers of supplication, of thanksgiving and praise, amid the many pious addresses which the Old Testament contains, many consist almost entirely of such citations from history. Even in the New Testament we find the like. Thus, Acts of the Apostles chap. vii. and 13. Heb. chap. xi. The ground of this lies deep in the nature of Judaism, which was not so much a form of religion introduced for one time, as a matter which originated in the earliest period, which was gradually developed and extended, but which was also, as every reflecting Israelite must have felt, a religion not yet completed and terminated. Thence the religious required to look back, not on one point of history only, but to the whole past time, and therewith to unite a contemplative look upon the future.

THE PENTATEUCH.

The first five books of the holy Scriptures, which

contain the Mosaic law, with many preparatory circumstances recorded in the history, and standing in connection, according to the declarations of the New Testament, John vii. 23. Luke xvi. 29; xxiv. 17. Romans v. 14, and many of the later Old Testament writings themselves, Josh. i. 7, 8; viii. 31; xxii. 5. 1 Kings ii. 3. 2 Kings xiv. 6. 2 Chron. xxx. 16. Nehemiah ix. 3. Ezra vi. 18, were composed by Moses. The books themselves contain many intimations that they were put together, as well with respect to their historical as their legal parts, by Moses, at the express command of God. Ex. xvii. 14; xxiv. 4, 7; xxxiv. 27. Numb. xxxiii. 2. Deut. xxviii. 58, 61; xxix. 20, 27; xxxi. 9—11, and xxii. 24.

In our sceptical time, it is true, there are persons who will not be satisfied with these testimonies; we can, however, adduce other grounds to establish the genuineness of the Mosaic writings, which at the same time throw light upon their nature. The opinion that the art of writing was not known at this early period is sufficiently refuted by the fact that Cadmus, who brought letters into Greece, wandered out of the land of Canaan when the Israelites went into it. The unconnected and abrupt nature which distinguishes the contents of the Mosaic writings, consisting as they do of laws, poetical pieces, and histories, in manifold variety, is best explained by the circumstances in which Moses wrote, and would certainly not have been, had they proceeded from a later author with all the ease at his disposal. That the laws given were written by Moses, is evident. The laws stand in such strict connexion with the historical narratives that the latter must have been composed at the same time as the former. The style of the books of Moses is different from that of later writings, other cities, other people, other customs, are mentioned than such as characterized later times. It is evident these books were written before the Israelites had kings, whilst throughout are seen the earlier condition of the people, the tribes which then originated and

manners and customs which afterwards were entirely lost.

Moses was the son of Amram and Jochebed. Ex. vi. 20, and descended in the fourth generation from Levi, the son of Jacob. His brother and sister were Aaron and Miriam. He was born at the time of the captivity in Egypt, and one thousand five hundred years before the birth of Christ. He was preserved by Divine Providence from the death to which the cruel command of Pharaoh doomed all the children of the Israelites, and given over to Pharaoh's daughter, who had him brought up and educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, Ex. ii. 3, 16. In his tenth year he slew an Egyptian, who ill-treated an Israelite, and was obliged to flee from the rage of Pharaoh, since it became generally known through the Israelites themselves. In Midian he married Zippora, the daughter of Jethro, a priest of Midian, and a worshipper of the true God. After the lapse of forty years, the Lord appeared unto him, and commanded him to retire into Egypt, and to guide his people out of it into the promised land of Canaan; but he must do many signs and wonders before Pharaoh would let the people go; and the destruction of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea first freed them entirely from slavery. Soon after the departure from Egypt Moses gave to the people the divine law at Mount Sinai; he led them forty years through the wilderness, gave them food and drink, in an extraordinary manner, and conducted them to the many victories over heathen nations. And whereas even he was once infected with the stubbornness which distinguished the people, he was not permitted to enter the promised land, but was favoured with a view of it from the top of Mount Nebo, where he died, and was buried. He was, according to the testimony of the Holy Scriptures themselves, the greatest prophet of the old covenant, in respect of his intimate converse with God, his great miracles and deeds, and the revelation which was communicated to him. As the Mediator therefore of the old covenant, he is

dignified by a comparison with Christ, the more distinguished Mediator of the new, Heb. iii. 2.

The five books of Moses, taken together, are frequently in the Holy Scriptures called the law, Luke x. 26. They are also commonly called the Pentateuch, a name taken from the Greek, which signifies the books of five volumes. But every one of these books has a peculiar name taken from its contents.

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES.

At first sight, this oldest of all books, called Genesis, from its containing the history of creation, appears to have nothing peculiar besides. It recounts only a few facts relative to the general history of man, but relates much more of apparently unimportant family histories and genealogies; it often passes over whole centuries, and appears, even in relation to the matters it contains, to be only a collection of unconnected fragments. But, on a minute inspection, a plan and connection are manifest throughout, which excite our admiration. It contains the oldest history of the earth, of men and religion, and conducts them back to their author, God. It goes not only higher up than every other history, but it avoids at the same time the usual error of every other history, which heaps fact upon fact, but at the same time neglects to point to the foundation of all, namely, divine Providence. Here we find the oldest, the most true traditions of the oldest histories of men; without doubt they had been handed down from one Patriarch to another. The report of these facts was circulated variously amidst the different tribes of men, and many narratives in the most ancient pagan authors, remind us even in their fabulous form of the original truth; but what by them is often wasted to the unnatural and the unintelligible, is narrated by Moses with dignified simplicity and clearness. Deeds which appear great in the eyes of men, civil wars, conquests, the wanderings of tribes, the founding of states, he passed over. On the other hand,

they are the doings of God which he described; the promises and providences of God form the contents of his history. And indeed he shows us the rule of this God, less in the great events relative to men, which are too high for us to comprehend, than in the more tranquil occurrences of domestic life, which precede them. He announces a providence which takes care of the most minute circumstances of private life, a justice which executes strict retribution, a grace which is freely given to all who seek it. The honour of God is the first object of this history, the conversion of men to God the second. Can a historian choose a more elevated, a more true point of view? In the model in which these objects are followed out, appears a peculiarity of the Holy Scriptures which no compend of science intends to be, nor any system designs to present. A spiritual writer has observed, the same regulated disorder presents itself to us here as is to be seen in external nature. When we connect with the family histories of the patriarchs here recorded the narratives of the subsequent books, it is impossible not to discern the first foundation of the great plan which God designed gradually to unfold, and the dawn as it were of all the divine revelations. Of the numerous family histories, Luther says, when a Monk, he could not comprehend what God means to do in his Bible with this domestic talking; later in life he learned to discern and value it, and such was the admiration with which he was seized in relation to the first book of Moses, that he delighted to expound it copiously almost to the day of his death. In this book, two portions may be distinguished; from the first chapter to the eleventh, may be called fragments concerning the old world. With the twelfth chapter begins the family history, which in the following books expands into the history of a people.

The Creation, Chaps. i. ii.—The Holy Scripture begins very suitably in the simplest words, with the statement of a fact, which lies as the foundation of all terrestrial existence, and beyond which the view of the

sharpest inquirer cannot reach. Creation itself is described in the very first words.

God created the heavens and the earth,—more can no one say. The following portion narrates more at large the particular conformation of what was created, and that in a regular order. First, the separation of the light from the darkness, the formation of the upper regions of the air, and the clouds in them. Upon the earth itself the separation of the waters from the firm land, the influence of the heavenly bodies, then the creation of living beings, in almost the same order, in the water, the air, and upon the earth. But man lay nearer the heart of the Creator than all besides. In the creating of him he proceeds, as it were, to hold a consultation with himself, and resembles the artificer who is just on the point of bringing forth the finest work he has ever invented and made. Lovely, delightful, child-like saying, it places God a thousand degrees nearer us, than the penetration of our wise men, in their hardly intelligible expressions, is able to remark concerning it. Man was made after the image of God; his dignity could not be expressed in a stronger manner.

A rational, voluntary being, capable of knowing, of loving, and obeying him, may well be said to be the crown of creation. For him shall the earth bring forth her flowers and fruits; he was destined to employ the beasts in his service, and for his maintenance. Ah! under the curse of sin how many blessings have been forfeited, a paradise of purity and bliss.

How comes all this to pass? God speaks, it is done; a word, a sign from him is sufficient. True and memorable! The narrative itself is highly descriptive, and such as might be given by an eye-witness; it is child-like, natural, simple, and withal elevated, such as a patriarch may be supposed to have narrated under the shade of a palm tree to listening youth, pointing, at the same time, to the high arch of heaven, to the fields, the trees, and the waters of the

earth. Besides this primitive document, the foundation of belief in one God, is incompatible with idolatry, or belief in an evil being as creator of the world. By it even all things, which among the heathen were objects of worship, the sun, moon, stars, and animals, &c. are represented as having been created by the one true God. All nature in its greatness, loveliness, and usefulness, is made to point to One, who, by his Almighty word, had called it into being.

Creation itself is mentioned (i. 1.) without any statement of the time required for it; but the farther formation of the work occupies six periods. Why was this not accomplished at once? Unnecessary question of curiosity! every thing is unfolded by degrees. This is the progress of external, as well as of the internal moral nature. Moreover, this very thing is so striking in the narrative, that the faithful labourer is led to consider that God himself hath given to him an example of activity, and hallowed a day of repose. From this followed naturally the solemnity of the Sabbath, and the fact that God is not only Lord of all lands, but also of times and days, indeed the Egyptians worshipped each day of the week as a particular god. The sublimest truths are expressed in this the most ancient record of mankind, in a way easily comprehended by the understanding of a child. All was called into being of God, according to the maxims of eternal wisdom, all obey his will, all are acknowledged by him as good. Man, his image upon earth, is called to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. The representation of creation, says J. G. Müller, "might be called a bible in miniature, the ideas which lie in this commencement of holy Scripture are generally intelligible, universally applicable, fruitful in rich consequences, in the highest degree simple, elevated, calculated to give repose to the spirit and heart, and are a ground for the right knowledge of God, of veneration and love towards God, and of trust in Him as the author of our eternal salvation." Though formed for all climates, man had at the beginning one of the

loveliest regions of the East, a paradise for his possession. Earth adorned itself at the command of its Creator to be the palace of its Lord. The history of creation closes appropriately, by expressing the first and noblest of relations, that of marriage, the seal of sanctification. Adam feels tenderly and delicately his need of a being of his own kind. The whole creation of which he was lord, did not satisfy him; he must have a being to whom he could communicate his sentiments, and whom he might love with the tenderness peculiar to his nature, in whose heart he could read the same sentiments, the same love. God himself confirms it. It is not good that man should be alone. He created the woman, and in her Adam joyfully acknowledged his image, a being of his own species, hence, Jesus to prove the holiness of marriage, could refer to the oldest times, when he, complaining of the indifference of his contemporaries to this holy relation, says, from the beginning it was not so.

The Fall of Man and its first consequences, Chaps. iii. iv.—In the preceding portions of this book we have been informed of God as the Almighty Creator of the universe; now we are led to consider him a lawgiver, an omnipresent ruler, an avenger of wrong. As in the preceding we learn what man was through the favour of God, so now we see what he became by his own criminality. All the arrangements of Providence which the Holy Scriptures record, relate to the fall of man into sin which is here narrated. Upon it rests the need of a Saviour, and his appearance upon earth. The first sin which the first man committed resembles all the sins that followed. Every sinner hath the same history as Adam—in his person Adam lives again. First his senses dwell with pleasure at the instigation of a seducer on the forbidden object, the better feeling still strives against the awakening desire, but the understanding knows how to bring it to rest by its sophistries; the desire becomes stronger, it knows no other good than the very forbidden object, it overcomes, and, ah! how easily is the step taken which is followed

by bitter consequences. No sooner is lust gratified than conscience awakens, rest departs, the sinner cannot bear to think of God, he would willingly conceal himself from him, and instead of the desired good he reaps only misery. How instructive must this history have been to the Israelites in particular, who in it could recognise a type of their own history: Adam, happy in his state of innocence, God his lawgiver and friend, who had singled him out above all the other creatures on earth, had assigned him the loveliest region, as he had given to the Israelites their country, the serpent as the seducer, the true type of all idolatry; Adam as a sinner punished of God and driven out of paradise, as the Israelites were carried away out of their own land to Babylon. These first three chapters contain the fundamental doctrines of true religion, and in a form too obvious to every one.

The expulsion of man from paradise compelled him to win his bread by the sweat of his brow; the two first kinds of employment, the keeping of cattle and agriculture, are exemplified so early as in Cain and Abel. Even in their case we find sacrifice as the natural expression of their gratitude and faith in God. Already also the sin of the parents is manifested in all its frightfulness in Cain, and Abel is the first in whom the threatening of death is fulfilled. In him, in Seth and Enoch, still appear the rays of that earlier innocence which characterized the infancy of the world, rays which were always becoming fainter and more divided. In chap. v. follow family registers up to Noah; these served to connect the later history with the earlier, and so to make the history of creation important even to such as live thousands of years later. They might also have prevented a by-way to idolatry, which, among nations, arose out of the circumstance that they dated their origin too far back, and mixed up their own history with that of their false gods. Persons of shallow mind have often maintained the genealogies of the Bible to be unprofitable for doctrine and

instruction, and unworthy a place in that divine book. From what has been said, it is clear they are the support of history, from which it all proceeds, and that it was in the highest degree worthy of God to care for their preservation, as well as for the maintenance of the most important truth, the most indispensable rule of life. Thus it was proper to record the inventions of Jubal and Tubal Cain, because the inventors of useful arts were worshipped in many nations as gods.

The deluge and Noah, Chaps. vi.—ix.—At the time of Enos, the grandson of Adam, a party of godly persons must have separated themselves from the other portion of mankind, hence arose the distinction between the sons of God and the sons of men. The true evil originated in the union of both. A new species of crime began, sensuality, and amid the universal destruction of morals which ensued, violent men appeared who subjected their fellow-creatures to their lusts and capriciousness. The kind and the degree of crime rendered a universal judgment necessary. This took place in the deluge. The moral of this awful catastrophe is, that the sins of men effect their ruin. It was particularly significant to the Jews that this mischief proceeded from ungodly women, whose allurements often brought upon them also sufficient misery. They might in the ark of Noah, behold, as it were, the emblem of the religion by which they should be saved from the evil world. Up to the time of Noah the history is very short—more was not necessary about the total overthrow of the early race. Only the most general survey—the origin of the human race—the first arrangement in relation to man—ground of the destruction connected with human nature, and the providence of the Creator in all these must have been declared. After the deluge it was like a new creation; there were new commandments and promises given; if they were not so copious as those given to Abraham, at the same time they were more definite than all the earlier. It was, however, promised that God would

no more revisit the earth with a similar judgment, and this promise is considered as a covenant of God concluded with men.

After Noah comes the history of the building the tower of Babel, which might have taught the Israelites to consider their God as the dispenser of all lands, and that it is the destination of men to inhabit the whole earth. After this follows a chasm, filled up by a family register, until a new series of divine revelations begins with Abraham, the man after God's own heart.

Abraham and his Family, Chaps. XII—L.—The history is now almost exclusively a mere family history, and all references to other matters are made only in so far as they relate to this subject. And this is very proper; for this family was destined by God to facilitate his purpose, which was to redeem man. It also sets before us the patriarchal life, which is portrayed here according to its simple dignity, consisting of many beautiful examples of faith, of obedience, of domestic happiness. After reading through these chapters we find ourselves at home in this family circle, and feel ourselves to be indeed a part of it. Now the divine revelations are set forth more clearly and more connectedly, and we are permitted to cast a glance into the far distant future. The pious Abraham (herewith opens the divine plan,) is called out of the idolatrous land in which he dwelt, to another land, and which was destined to be for the most part the theatre of the divine revelations. It need not surprise us that God at first made choice only of one man: that is for the most part the way and manner of Divine Providence when it would enlighten men. Through the smallest means it accomplishes the greatest ends. On this account is the kingdom of heaven compared to a grain of mustard seed. Abraham is set forth in the history of religion as one greatly distinguished by Divine favour. God made a covenant with him, Abraham vowed to him, that with his family, he would acknowledge him as the one true God, and obey his commandments; and circumcision, an outward sign, marked this obligation.

On the other hand, God promised to him that his descendants should possess that land which he now passed through with his flocks as a stranger, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. Often were these promises repeated; and dark as the latter promise remained, and from the first was even destined to remain, yet it became gradually more apparent, and formed the main ground of faith to the patriarchs. Soon also ordinary, and extraordinary means, were manifest in carrying these promises into effect. Abraham was called not merely for his own time; it is true that he made here and there a declaration of his faith, and even declared to others the God whom he served in his heart, but this was only a secondary matter: he was rather to be employed in producing and forming a particular family, which should stand in the most intimate relation to the God of Abraham. He was called because of the future, and hence the promise of a numerous progeny—hence the change of his name from Abram to Abraham, *i. e.* father of many people—hence his descendants were always considered a peculiar people—hence was the land of Canaan promised to them, and their claims to it founded upon their descent from the worshipper of the true God, and their own reverence for his name—hence in fine he purchased for himself a burying place. He proved himself worthy of the free grace of God which had chosen him. In general, the Israelite viewed in the character of his great ancestor, as Moses described him, the portrait of one as wise, as noble—of one as devout towards God, as just in relation to his fellow-men—of a man polite, prudent, ever uniform, in all his relations unchanged, the true picture of a pious man whose godliness had poured peace into his heart, and impressed on all his words and actions the stamp of wishing to please God. However, he is not set forth merely as a pattern to his descendants according to the flesh, he is also mentioned in the New Testament as the Father of the faithful. He believed the divine promise when there was not the least

appearance of its fulfilment, and this faith was accounted to him for righteousness. And when at length its fulfilment began, with the remarkable birth of his son Isaac, he hesitated not a moment, at the divine command, to present this his only son for a sacrifice. His faith was stronger than the feeling of the father's heart, and God spared him this sorrow; and the very son, whom faith was ready to give up to death, was ordained to make Abraham the father of many nations. The divine purpose was always unfolding itself more clearly, not through Ishmael, but through Isaac, xvii. 19; and that even his descendants must first serve and be tormented in a strange land, unto the time they would be permitted to return to the promised land, xv. 13.

In Isaac was transmitted the patriarchal dignity and the piety of his father, though not always the firmness of his character, and his high reputation. To him also were the promises given to his father repeated, but the sovereignty of the divine counsels were manifested also in him, whilst for the transmission of the blessing, Jacob, the younger son, was chosen instead of Esau, the elder. The very choice of this man, who, besides many striking proofs of trust in God, gives, on the other hand, so many evidences of a weak and faint-hearted character, must have led the Israelites to feel that God had chosen them of his own free favour. On this account Moses adduces his faults with a noble frankness, and fears not that they might give occasion to misconstructions. In general, as the history advances the more, all has a particular reference to the Israelites.

It must have been remarkable to them, that Jacob was obliged to fly out of the promised land and serve twenty years; remarkable, that as he had deceived his father, so he also was vexed by his children, Hose, xii. 4—13. Remarkable was each single transaction of his twelve sons, from whom the twelve tribes sprung. Remarkable was every word of praise or blame, of blessing or complaint, which he pronounced concerning

them. Meanwhile, after the example of Abraham, Jacob also believed his God, who had manifested himself to him through so many expressions of his favour; here he was immoveable, in every distress he called upon God, and humbly acknowledged that he was unworthy of all the truth and mercy which the Lord had bestowed upon him. Whilst an Esau, with rude indifference, could say, behold I must die, and what advantage is this birthright to me, xxv. 32, and Heb. xii. 16, all the sayings and doings of Jacob were designed to tell in posterity; he felt himself called less in himself than his posterity. With desire he looked continually into the future, and took an oath from his sons, that they would take his bones with them and bury them in the promised land. Yea, he himself divided in his blessing the land among them, at a time when, to human view, there was no appearance that it would ever come into their possession. With the selling of Joseph into Egypt, something more of the divine purpose begins to discover itself. Insignificant as this occurrence appears, yet it had the most momentous consequences. The chosen family was to be preserved in Egypt not only during the famine, but also remain united in this fruitful and happy land, and multiply until the time of receiving the land of promise would be filled up. The measure of sin on the part of the Canaanites was not yet full, xv. 16, and the family was not yet sufficiently numerous to possess the land, nor sufficiently religious to resist all the allurements to idolatry. In Egypt, the most civilized country of that period, they were first to learn the useful arts and employments, and become accustomed to order and obedience under law and civil institutions. Here, among a people which, in matters of religion, willingly shut themselves up against changes, should they remain secure against seducements to idolatry, here was Moses to be born and educated; here, in fine, was the pressure of slavery impending over them, to call their attention to the forgotten God of their fathers. But even here there yet lived, at least in the

hearts of the more pious, the old family traditions. On this account, whilst Joseph ranked with the more distinguished Egyptians, he begat sons who leaned more to his despised people than to the Egyptians. Hence Moses, when he learned his origin, chose rather to suffer reproach with his people, than enjoy the honours of Egypt, Heb. xi. 26.

THE SECOND BOOK OF MOSES.

In the Second book of Moses, which, on account of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, is called Exodus, the history goes over many centuries, and begins again with the time when the posterity of the seventy, which number had gone down with Israel into Egypt, Gen. xlv. 27, had increased to a very great number, Ex. i. 7. Now the four hundred years of removal and servitude were over, and the Lord visited his people. As in the first book are described the choice and guidance of one family, so here are described the choice and guidance of the people which sprang from this family, and the relations of the latter to the former continually set forth.

Here already begin to be fulfilled in part, the promise recorded in the first book. Here all is full of traces of a divine plan and a divine agency, nay, which the Lord brings to pass gradually, and by obscure means. Who recognizes not in the wonderful preservation and training of Moses, the hand of God, who designed the man whom he had chosen as the leader of his people, even before his revealing it to him, into a fit instrument for the accomplishment of his will. Who looks not backward to the early promises and guidances, when God revealed himself to Moses as the God of his fathers, and commanded him to lead his people into the promised land, Exod. iii. 6. In the series of wonderful chastisements, with which the stiff-necked Egyptians were visited, even to the death of their first-born, and to the destruction of those that pursued in the Red Sea, Exod. vii. 14. And in the new series of wonders of goodness and grace, which

the Israelites experienced in their journeys through the wilderness, xv. 17, who does not acknowledge the wisdom of God, who through striking signs and wonders manifested himself a strong and jealous God, the avenger of iniquity, the loving father of his worshippers, when he should find in this people, who had so long forgotten him, and had been debased by slavery, faith, trust, and obedience. As the faith which lived in the hearts of the patriarchs was called into life again, so must the people have seen that they were able of themselves to do nothing, but with the help of God every thing; so must they themselves stand in the eye of neighbouring nations, as a witness for the one true God, and his mighty works, *Exod* xv. 15; v. 2, 9, 10. The strong hand which had brought them out of Egypt, must have remained indelibly impressed on their memories and hearts, and still, after centuries, inspired songs proclaimed the wonders of this deliverance, *Psal* lxxviii. lxxvi. lxxii. cv. cvi. cxiv. *Hosea* xi. In addition to all this there was the fearful solemn announcement of the law upon Mount Sinai, chap. xix. 20. After a preparation the people saw with their own eyes the lightnings and thick clouds which encompassed the mount, they heard the rolling thunders, and made the covenant with God, by which they were chosen to be a peculiar people, and a holy priesthood; they promised, all that the Lord hath said we will perform and do, *Exod*. xiv. 7. More lovely and mild was the revelation of God at the Christian feast of Pentecost, more friendly was his intercourse with the patriarchs. But this strict sternness, this terrible pomp at the delivery of the law, was entirely suited to the communication of the law, the schoolmaster leading to Christ. In like manner also, it was reckoned the most efficient way to work on the capabilities and views which then prevailed, and on the hard hearts of the Israelites, which were still to be softened and cultivated. The mind of the child must be led in one way, the powers of the youth in another; a family is somewhat different, a people somewhat different still. Every page of the Holy Scriptures, teaches that God at all

times revealed himself in a manner adapted to the capacities of the people and the wants of the time. Hard was the task which was assigned to Moses, and attainable only through peculiar aid from God, who had called him to it. He was to unite into one people many hundred thousand of their men, slightly held together through the tie of a common descent and similar hopes. He was to form into a high-minded nation, and bring back to the faith of their forefathers, the wild race, sunk under a sense of slavery, and but a short way removed from idolatry. He who had even in his youth so sad an experience, how little the people were inclined to free themselves, was to overcome not only the aversion of the people but also of the king. An unwarlike man, who had been educated at court, and had lived forty years long among peaceful shepherds in Midian, he was to deliver from the powerful hand of Pharaoh, a multitude, unwarlike too, and unarmed. Modest and timid, so that he laid on his brother Aaron the task of speaking, he was to set himself forth as the head and centre of a people now for the first time to be formed and civilized; as mediator with a king who had hardened his heart. This was, however, the least part of the task which Moses had to perform. Continually beset with the perverseness and timidity of a people, who could not be contented with the most obvious signs of the divine protection, he must nevertheless take them into a school of religious and moral training, which for forty years daily put his patience to the trial. No wonder that he, even before he knew the entire greatness of the task, strove so long against undertaking it, and who may blame him, when he sighs occasionally under the burden of his office. The history of the world could hardly furnish a more honourable character than that of Moses; who sacrificed himself, and the quiet of his old age (for he was eighty years old when he led forth the people, and laboured with unabated zeal until he was a hundred and twenty), to the call of his God and the deliverance of his nation. He was, so it is recorded of him, Numb. xii. 14, a

man much harassed above all the men on earth ; and quite contrary to the conceptions of those who think always of him with the rod of chastisement in his hand, and with the thunder and curses in his mouth ; Sirach celebrates his meekness xlv. 14. His disinterestedness was so large, that his own sons were only common Levites. His love to his people, who so often grieved him with their ingratitude, was expressed both in his whole life, which was full of sacrifices, and most heartily, in so many supplications which he offered upon their behalf ; yet the foundation of his character was trust in God, his disposition to fly to him in all his difficulties, his looking for divine counsel in every perplexity, his firm purpose to act in the name of God. By this very course he fitted himself to be an instrument for the execution of the divine counsels.

To any one who considers the preceding remarks, it must be obvious that what Moses accomplished could only have been done through peculiar aid from God. In his peculiar circumstances, miracles were necessary to help and to subdue the intractable temper of the people. The ideas therefore, of those who would see nothing but natural occurrences in the miracles related is quite perverted. It has been even said that the plagues inflicted on the Egyptians were only natural phenomena, such as frequently occur in that country ; but that these, which would probably in other circumstances have been spread over a long space of time—should have followed in so rapid succession, have taken place at the announcement of Moses, and have been removed again at his request—how could this have happened otherwise than under the special direction of God ?

Travellers have been appealed to, according to whose narratives there are shallow places in the Red Sea through which men could easily ride, or in distress, wade through on foot ; but every one who has read the description by that accurate traveller Niebhur, must know this renowned man declares the passage of a whole people, even at the shallowest places, to be a

real miracle. Besides, the entire hypothesis is refuted by the destruction of the Egyptians, who, it may be supposed should have known the best way, at least as well as the Israelites. That multitudes of quails, affrighted by a storm, should have fallen down in the Arabian desert, is said even to this day occasionally to take place; but how could Moses, without a particular illumination from above, have so accurately predicted, "The Lord will give ye this evening flesh to eat." Amid so many rebellions as were raised against Moses, not a single person ventured to question the reality of his miracles.

From the twentieth chapter to the end of the book, follow different arrangements, interrupted by historical sections, which are placed beside each other, partly without internal connexion, and refer for the most part to the regulation of the worship of God before the tabernacle. Several of them are repeated in the following books, and with greater definiteness. From Moses we need not generally expect a collection of laws reduced to order. He wrote his history and his laws amid the difficulties of journeyings, the anxieties of the judicial office, and the combats he had with neighbouring nations. The attentive reader will discover a sure proof that Moses is the author, by the repeated interruptions and repetitions, and the want of regular arrangement; for a later writer would certainly have placed beside one another such events as were connected. This is the place for casting a look on the spirit or essence of the Mosaic religion, comparing it with the religion of the patriarchs; nothing of the former is lost, but many things unknown before were added to it. Did God manifest himself to the child-like mind, as a father and loving friend, to a race arrived at the years of juvenile roughness and refractoriness, he must reveal himself as a strict Lord and Lawgiver.

In the law of Moses there is also expressed a new development of the divine purpose. To the early promises, threatenings also are attached, which were

often sufficiently accomplished. Do we compare it with Christianity, certainly when compared with this last and highest revelation of the divine will, it appears imperfect; but according to the declarations of the New Testament itself, it was with the highest wisdom adapted to the very condition of the Jewish people at that particular time, and as a means of preparation for the more perfect religion. Matth. xix. 8. 1 Tim. i. 9. Gal. iv. 3. Col. ii. 17. Heb. ix. 8.; viii. 5.

If we consider the Mosaic laws by themselves, they are usually divided into three portions, embracing the religious, the moral, and the political precepts. Under the religious laws there are, it is true, very many which refer only to the outward and ceremonial part of divine worship. However, the Jewish people required such outward rites as means of directing their thoughts toward God, and as a means of preservation from the idolatrous usages of neighbouring nations. Still, however, there is included in all these usages of the Mosaic worship, reference to the fundamental truth of religion; that there is one God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Whilst all nations of this period worshipped a multitude of gods, and that under figures of animals and forms even more rude, Moses declared the foundation of his religion, that there is but one God, who was, and is, and is to come, who is elevated above creation, who, as he created heaven and earth, cares for every creature, but who, amid the people of the earth, has chosen Israel to be his darling son. In this he expressed a doctrine more sublime than had come into the mind of the wisest among the heathen, and made it to be the spiritual possession of a people who in general cultivation did not surpass other nations. Tell, ye deriders of the Bible, how it came to pass, that amid the most renowned people of antiquity a truth lay concealed, which Moses the despised knew, and which was received with general dislike only, when it awoke a thousand years afterwards in the minds of Anaxagoras and Socrates, and that too with considerable obscurity?

To these ordinances chiefly appertain the matters that are contained in the last chapters of this book, very copiously relating to the erection of the tabernacle. To a people so much under the influence of sense as the Jews, a temple was necessary to enable them to think of their God as particularly present, to enjoy him, and to worship him. But the migratory people could only have a moveable temple, which could easily be set up again, with its tents on every side, whether for a few days or weeks. Of this kind was the tabernacle, which could easily be broken up, carried farther without difficulty, and again erected in any place they pleased. The great tabernacle, covered with costly skins and tapestry, and adorned with the most costly workmanship of that time, and furnished with the neat outer court which was enclosed with red tapestry, and had an altar of burnt-offering, on which the priests, dressed in costly garments, presented the sacrifice, may well have presented a sublime appearance. In the forepart of the tabernacle was the altar of incense, the golden table for the show-bread, the golden candlestick with seven branches, and a golden horn full containing the holy oil. A curtain, suspended in the midst of the tabernacle, prevented the more distant view. Here was the Holy of Holies, where the high priest only dared to enter, and that once a-year. Here stood also the ark of the covenant; it was made of costly wood, and was overlaid with gold inside and outside, the flat lid was wholly of gold, and on it sat on both sides cherubims of gold, with eyes looking downward, and wings outspread as if bowing in worship before the invisible God, who manifested his presence by the pillar of cloud and fire. In the ark of the covenant were placed the tables of the law, the pot with manna, Aaron's rod that blossomed, of the wood of the almond tree, by which Aaron and his sons were confirmed in the office of the priesthood: here also were the original records of the Mosaic law; also at chap. ix. 1—7, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, all this is referred to with the remark, that it had a typical reference to the ordi-

nances of a more perfect religion. Sacrifices, feasts, and other ordinances, served to keep alive the religious worship, which is treated of particularly in the third book. The other religious laws are chiefly directed against idolatry, and all that might lead to it, namely, image worship, against intercourse with the heathen, against the adopting of their religious usages, but we find among these even that law which Jesus himself declared to be the highest, namely, love to God with the whole heart, Deut. vi. 5. It is worthy of remark, and is a distinguishing feature of the Mosaic religion, that in it God appears not only as the Creator of heaven and earth, but also as the King of the Israelitish people. He was the protector and sovereign Lord of this people, and had purchased them to himself by having rescued them from Egypt, and had given over to them the land of Canaan as if for possession. Still this people are said to form a state not of the usual kind, but a divine state (a theocracy). As in other states, the king or the government commanded, in like manner, the same course must be observed here, even in civil occurrences, viz. when the people should make a halt, or march farther, God was to be consulted, and his will followed. The divine King was indeed invisible; but his presence was declared by the ark of the testimony and the pillar of cloud upon it, and his will uttered by his servants, Moses, and the prophets.

The moral precepts also of Moses, though not so pure or perfect as those which Jesus delivered in his sermon on the Mount, yet are infinitely nobler than the laws of all other people of antiquity, and than what we could expect generally from any mere human legislator of that time.

The chief law was continually repeated, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Already in the decalogue had been commanded respect on the part of children towards parents, the inviolability of property, the purity of the married state, conscientiousness in the matter of giving testimony, and not only the evil deed, but also the evil lust, was forbidden. All duty towards a

neighbour was made to rest on the foundation, "Love thy neighbour as thyself," Lev. xix. 18. All were to be considered as brethren, and the servants of the one God. But the most beautiful feature in these commandments is, that they protect particularly those persons who, by situation, descent, or want, are exposed to the violence of others. Above all, mildness towards servants, slaves, and strangers, is here commanded, and they are persuaded thereto by the consideration that the Israelites also were slaves and strangers in the land of Egypt, Deut. v. 14. Ex. xxi. 1—3. Lev. xv. 33. But particularly does the gracious and merciful God in his laws take care of the poor, Deut. xv. 11, 26; xi. 13; xv. 7—10. And the poor debtor, who till then was unprotected in all the countries of the ancient world, was secured by the laws of Moses against the arbitrariness of his creditor, Deut. chap. xxiv. 6, 10—17. It was commanded that respect should be paid to all aged persons, Lev. xix. 32. All derision of the infirm was strictly forbidden, Lev. xix. 14; and even towards the inferior animals sympathy and forbearance were inculcated, Deut. xxv. 4; v. 14; xxii. 10. The laws relating to the war against the Canaanites were indeed extremely strict, and tending to their complete extermination; the measure of their iniquity had become full. By the most abominable idolatries, and the most shameful licentiousness, they had drawn upon themselves their own destruction. The Israelites durst not have such neighbours, if they would not vanquish them, in the time of peace they would be corrupted by them by melancholy seductions, notwithstanding all their victories in war. The Israelites executed the divine command in this matter only imperfectly; bitter experience soon showed how little the neighbourhood of the heathen tended to the accomplishment of the object which God had in view with Israel. Had a mere human leader given the command to exterminate all the inhabitants of a vanquished country. the command would have excited abhorrence in all minds; that a man would give up his

fellow-creatures to destruction. But it is a matter entirely different when God so commands; he is the Lord of men, he has called them into being, and can dispose of their time and fortunes as seemeth good to him. When he hath chosen to exterminate through pestilence and earthquake, who dares murmur against him? In like manner, when he hath permitted men to perish in war, who ventures to blame him? he is not obliged to give account thereof to us; such events belong to the mysteries of his government. But this is certain, viz. that the God who, in the laws of Moses, manifested such tenderness for the poor, the widow, and the stranger, who has even shown his care for the inferior animals, can have lacked neither mercy, nor wise reasons, when he gave a command, which indeed to human view appears hard. The consequence also is not to be overlooked, that the Canaanites were not rooted out at once; but must have given way so far only as was necessary to make room for the Israelites. Thus the whole plan was carried into effect only in a gradual way, and with less effusion of blood; and to the Canaanites there remained the choice of emigrating at any time. In like manner, the political laws were given most wisely, in such a way as would conduce most to the good of the people, and the fertility of the land. To this head belong the ordinances relative to the Sabbath; the year of jubilee, to the keeping pure the seed to be committed to the ground, Levit. xix. 19, with respect to the breaking out of the fruit-buds for the first three years, Levit. xix. 23. For this reason six free cities were appointed, in order that those who had committed unintentional murder might fly therto, and escape the blood avenger, Levit. xxi. 14. Numb. xxxv. 9—34. Deut. xix. 13. The duty to defend their country in times of war was of universal obligation, yet with some wise and benevolent exceptions, Deut. xx. 5, 6; xxiv. 5, also in the event they would choose a king, this was considered, and wise laws were given for the regulation of the king, Deut. xvii. 14—20. The necessary punishments are indeed

strict, yet not inhuman, Deut. xxv. 2, 7. Thus the Mosaic law, by its religious, moral, and political institutions, might have rendered a people, by strictly observing it, the happiest and the most honourable.

What we have seen here in general, we would now show more clearly, in a more minute consideration of some more important laws in the third Book.

THIRD BOOK OF MOSES.

The book has been called by the name of Leviticus, as it contains the ordinances according to which the priests and Levites had to be guided. On this account also, the Jewish worship has been called Levitical, Heb. vii. 11. The history concerning the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, which, as recorded in the second book, chap. xl. 2, had been continued to the close of the first year, is on this very account interrupted in the whole of this third book, and to the 10th chap. 11th verse in the beginning of the fourth. The Levitical ordinances follow now in an order which may be substantially surveyed without difficulty. First, the writer treats concerning the sacrifices, chap. i.—vii. Then concerning the priests, viii.—x. concerning purifications, xi.—xv. and then of different other matters, in particular the feasts, xvi.—xxvii. These laws were imparted to Moses from the tabernacle of testimony, in the first month of the second year after the departure from Egypt, Lev. i. 1.

Worthy of remark in this particular, are the laws relating to sacrifice, chap. i.—vii. It was so natural an effect of the first knowledge of God, incomplete though it was, that man should express respect and homage to him as the Creator and Lord of nature, by presenting the best which he had.^a It was so natural a thought, that man should think to free himself from

^a The deepest investigations have made manifest that sacrifice originated in a divine appointment after the fall. See an article in *Pantheon Ægyptiorum de Origine cultus Fœrarum.*
—*Note by the Translator.*

guilt, and the divine displeasure against sin, and in thus expressing his repentance, hope to expiate his offences against the judge of heaven; and God himself was pleased to accept the natural expression of a simple mind, Gen. iv. 4; viii. 21, and sanctioned it by his laws, Exod. xxiii. 15. Hence, we find this mode of divine worship in the first human families, iv. 3, and it prevailed not only among the pious descendants of Adam and Noah, but it remained so long as even the obscure sense of a deity was preserved in all the aberrations into idolatry which distinguished the heathen. But the sacrifices of the Mosaic religion had a high and appropriate meaning, as we are taught by a nearer consideration of them. The most different views have been suggested as to the design and import of sacrifices; they are most naturally regarded as gifts which were offered to God; as an expression of thanks, of reverence, of the need of redemption, and a recognition of the divine sovereignty. Thus understood, the sacrifices of the ancients were substantially the same as is our so called sacrifice even to the present day. Nothing is more natural than the origin of sacrifice in this sense, childlike gratitude impelled the happy shepherd to consecrate his animals to that invisible being, whose blessing multiplied his flocks. Conscience impelled the person who was conscious of guilt, to present perhaps the most valued of his goods, in order to confirm his repentance, and to avert the wrath of his God. Of this kind must have been the conceptions of Sirach, when he said of offerings—give to the highest whereof he hath given to thee, and what thy hand findeth that give with joyous eyes. Besides, it is set forth as an ordinance repeated of Moses, that a man should not appear empty before the Lord, but that every one should appear before him according to the gift of his hand, which the Lord thy God had bestowed upon thee, Exod. xxiii. 15; xxxiv. 20. Deut. xvi. 16. The gifts which were dedicated to Jehovah, were reckoned signs of homage and worship, Isaiah xliii. 23, 24. Zeph. iii. 10. Psal. lxxviii. 19—30. The most of the words

which, in the Hebrew, are used respecting sacrifices, denote according to their derivation, presents; and the word in the New Testament, which is used in general to express sacrifice, has originally the same acceptation. On that account Luther has well translated.—When thou offerest thy gift upon the altar.

The Levitical sacrifices were either ordinary or extraordinary: of the former, some were offered only once a year, at the high feasts, others monthly, some on every week, some daily, and that twice in the day, morning and evening. All of these sacrifices, with which others besides, *ex. gr.* the sin-offering, might be associated, were called burnt-offerings. These were provided out of the temple treasury, and required yearly 113 young kids, 37 rams, 1068 lambs, and 31 he-goats. The extraordinary, *i. e.* those not appointed for a particular time, were either obligatory or voluntary. To the obligatory belonged those burnt-offerings which were to be offered by women who had been in child-bed, Lev. xii. 6; by such as had been healed of leprosy, Lev. xiv. 31; by a priest at his consecration, Lev. xviii. 18; or those which had to be observed at gathering in the harvest, and on other solemn occasions, Lev. xxix. 10. To this belong the expiatory and sin-offerings, chapters iii. and iv, which had to be presented for individuals after faults committed, and for sanctification, when they were Levitically unclean. The voluntary offerings were such as might be offered when the individual thought proper: to this class belong the thank and praise-offerings, Lev. iii. 7, and xi. 21.

The ordinary sacrifices were wholly burned upon the altar, Lev. i. 13; but of the expiation and sin-offering, the priest received a portion, which he was privileged with his sons to eat after they had been consecrated to the priest's office, Lev. vi. 27—29. Of the voluntary offerings, three portions were made, one part was burned upon the altar, another part belonged to the priest, whereof his daughters might take a part, x. 4; but the greatest part belonged to the offerer himself, he

consumed it with his household the same day on which it was offered, or the following; on the third day nothing was allowed to remain, vii. 15, 17. There was still another kind of offering not adduced, indeed, here, only on account of its rare observance, a sort of bloody offering, namely, the offering of the covenant, which was used especially in reference to the covenant of God with Abraham, Gen. xv. 9; and the Jewish people, Exod. xxiv. 5, 8. Jer. xxxiv. 18. Besides these bloody or animal offerings, there were also unbloody, namely, meat and drink offerings, which, in like manner, might be divided. The ordinary meat and drink offerings were associated with the ordinary burnt-offering, and consisted of bread, wine, oil, salt, incense, and fruits: there were yearly for this purpose, 268 ephas of wheaten flour, 370 hins of oil, and 335 hins of wine. To this division belonged also the show-bread, which every Sabbath, laid fresh on the table, was replaced by new bread on the Sabbath following, and eaten by the priests: the extraordinary meat-offerings, again, were either voluntary, and proceeded chiefly from vows which persons had made in good or evil days, or prescribed; of which kind were the first fruits, and the offering of wheat flour, which the poor, when guilty of trespasses, were instructed to offer instead of the bloody sacrifice.

A question naturally arises here, what ends were served by such strict regulations in respect of offerings? The answer is manifold: they served,

1.) To preserve a living reverential remembrance of God. Among a people which had no wish for the worship of God in spirit and in truth, to the time at which the first great fundamental truth of religion, that there is one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, was implanted in susceptible minds, when first a preparation was laid for the future all-prevailing revelation of God, the thought of God during this period, and his worship, could only be preserved by an external worship, such as was adapted to strike the senses. The many offerings reminded not only of the God of heaven and earth,

and of the absolute dependance upon him, in which the Israelites stood, in every situation that demanded sacrifices, but at the same time they excited trust and veneration, and a holy fear of one invisible, before whom nothing impure was permitted to appear.

2.) For the avoidance of idolatry. Had the mind of the Israelite, which naturally clave to externals, had no sacrifice, it would have sought them elsewhere, and that among their idolatrous neighbours; but now it had itself a sacrificial institution, in comparison of which it might despise all others, and in which, even the feeling of the far-seeing could rest with satisfaction. Still father, God took care, by an express command, that offerings should be presented no where else than before the tabernacle of the testimony (as at a later period in the temple,) Lev. xviii. 8, 9. 2 Sam. xxiv. 25.

3.) It tended to keep alive in the mind the feeling of their own sinfulness and guilt. The ceremonial offerings could impress this deeply on the mind. As the animal had to be slain, in like manner so might the man with justice have been punished: this was already signified in the sin and guilt offerings, which were to be presented for individual offences; but more strikingly still it was signified, by the great sin-offering which was slain by the high priest, on the feast of atonement, in the name of the whole congregation. At this time every one, even he who was chargeable with no outward fault, was reminded, that in the sight of the most holy, he was not clean, and directed to acknowledge to the higher judge, that he needed salvation, which he could not of himself procure.

4.) For the furtherance of a brotherly and benevolent spirit. To this the thank-offerings, and the offerings of praise in particular, gave occasion; at which, usually in the high feasts, *ex. gr.* the feast of the pass-over, their whole families were collected; and also the poor, the man-servants, the bond-servants, because none of the flesh was allowed to remain: thus, even

the last mentioned enjoyed occasionally a happy day in the year.

With all these undeniable advantages, offerings, through mistake as to their nature, might prove sometimes disadvantageous, when a man, without any spiritual feeling, stopped short, merely with the outward solemnity; for this very reason God so often gave the Israelites to understand by his prophets, with what disposition he required the offerings to be accompanied, and how they would avail nothing when the heart was not with them, Psal. xl. 7; l. 13. Isa. i. 11. Jer. vi. 20; xiv. 12. Amos v. 22. Micah vi. 6, 7.

In the Christian institution, which is the perfection of revealed religion, the economy which the wisdom of God appointed for the infancy of the world is set aside, as all the incentives and advantages which sacrifices, even in their highest spiritual acceptance, could impart, are now, through fellowship with Jesus Christ, not only restored to us, but may also be attained in an unspeakably higher degree. Hence he is not only called a sacrifice, but it is expressly remarked, also, that his death makes all other sacrifices superfluous. Heb. x. 14. Hence he is compared with almost all kinds of sacrifices, with a guilt and sin-offering, 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10. Rom. iii. 25. Heb. x. 12; with a covenant offering, Matt. xxvi. 28. Luke xxii. 26. Heb. ix. 15, 18; with the private sin and purification offering of the high priest before his entrance to the sanctuary, Heb. ix. 12, 13; with a burnt-offering, Eph. v. 2; and with the paschal lamb, which, indeed, belonged to the thank-offerings.

Hence the Old Testament regulation about sacrifices, must be considered through the annunciations of the New Testament, as a recognized type of Jesus; and particularly of his death, namely, when we, under the type, apprehend an arrangement, or a person, which the races of men in early times understood but imperfectly, but which, in later times, have been made perfectly intelligible, by the very things typified, and thus, by their own insufficiency, every reflecting person

was directed by the Mosaic sacrifices to him whom they represented. And now, when the latter has appeared, he gave to the preparative awakening ardent desire to discern the preparation.

The maintaining an institution so minute and multifarious, as was the whole Mosaic law, required a peculiar and numerous priesthood. The ordinances which relate to this particular are recorded in the 8th and 10th chapters, yet we meet with scattered laws elsewhere, relating to the same divine institution.

The most important personage was the high priest. In the time of Moses, he was Aaron his brother, and then his sons and descendants, until the time the Jews became subject to the Romans. Of his costly and significant dress, there is an account in Exod. xxviii. and of his solemn consecration in Levit. ix. He was head of all the priests and Levites, had oversight of the whole divine service, was in particular, on the feast of expiation after the sacrifices were presented, to go once into the Holy of Holies, Lev. xvi. 23, in order to make atonement for himself and the people, to pray for the people and to bless them, Numb. vi. 23, and in difficult cases to ask counsel of the Lord by Urim and Thummim, Exod. xxviii. 15. Numb. xxvii. 21. The whole numerous priesthood, of whom he had the oversight, was likewise of the family of Aaron. Of the priests' dress we have an account, Exod. xxviii. 39, of their consecration v. 9, in Exod. xxix. Their business was to preserve the holy vessels, to keep the fire alive on the altar of burnt-offering; to offer incense twice a day, Exod. xxx. 7. They slew, cleaned, and offered the sacrifices; sprinkled the altar with their blood, and burned them, removed the shew-bread, and replaced it with new loaves; settled all disputes relative to civil and religious concerns, Deut. xxi. 5. Lev. x. 10, 11, they were particularly to decide as to leprosy, Lev. xiii. 2, they looked to the purification of the leprous, and watched generally over the observance of the whole law; the original documents of which they preserved in the holy place. They were divided by

David, with the view of a better arrangement in the future temple service, into twenty-four classes, who, in conducting the worship, took the place in succession, 1 Chron. xxv. In the smaller religious ordinances the whole tribe of the Levites, which must be distinguished from the priests themselves, was employed to assist.

The first born in every family, according to Numb. iii. 13, should, properly speaking, have been set apart to the divine service, but God expressly desired in their room, the Levites, who had already distinguished themselves on the way through the wilderness, by their aversion to idolatry, and were, besides, the kindred of Moses and Aaron. Their consecration is copiously described, Numb. viii. and the duties of their office, iv. They also, on the building of the temple, were divided into different orders, and had their offices assigned to them, 1 Chron. xxiv. These God-devoted servants were not settled like the other tribes in a particular district of the land; but they lived, scattered among the others, as if it were to remind the people always of God, and to promote his worship.

All these ordinances prove that Moses founded a priesthood, distinguished by its numbers, its descent, its dress, its revenues. He hoped to preserve religion in the respectful regards of the people, as he placed its ministers in a situation which inspired the sensual people with esteem. But the priests were also, by the theocratic constitution of the state, the proper officers of the invisible divine King; and thus, even in a civil aspect, they were in a position which commanded peculiar distinction. The person of the high priest is the most significant type of Christ in the Old Testament; who, particularly by the relation of the means not reaching to the object which hovered before, awakened the idea of the want of a higher Mediator between God and man: the desire after a more perfect intercessor. And after the appearance of the latter, the thinking must have been led to understand, that the sacerdotal office was a mere preparation for the great high priest. In this respect, particularly in the Epistle

to the Hebrews, is the comparison of Jesus with the high priest so copiously treated, and so carried out, that in every point of the comparison, it is not only said wherein it was similar, but also in what respects the latter was the mere type and shadow. The former the complete fulfilment. Any one may see this largely delineated in the remarks on this epistle.

From the 11th to the 15th chapter, the subject matter is what should be considered unclean according to the Levitical law, and what should be acknowledged as clean, yet we find particular laws relative to these matters in other places. The Israelites could not mistake that these laws referred to matters merely external, even in these ordinances which were merely external, and therefore no longer binding on Christians, we cannot mistake the wisdom of the Divine Lawgiver who gave them to this people under such circumstances. First of all, the clean and unclean, or animals permitted and forbidden for food, are treated of. By the definite institution relating to food. Under the latter, the Israelites were forbidden to use, and, for wise reasons, they were excluded all nearer and friendly intercourse with heathen neighbours, and were also preserved from many enticements to idolatry. For where a person is excluded by law from the table of another, a closer connection, particularly marriage and daily intercourse, cannot possibly take place. Farther, the Israelites, who, by their pastoral life might have been easily seduced into the wandering mode of life of the neighbouring Arabian herdsmen, by this institute about meats were bound, as it were, because they could observe it no where so easily as there. In fine, the greatest number of the animals forbidden as food, at least in a hot climate, such as that the Israelites lived under, were injurious to health. For this reason, all animals which died of disease, or were torn, were forbidden, Ex. xxii. 30, but particularly the drinking of blood, Lev. iii. 17, which, besides its noxiousness, not only had a tendency to make men savage, but also idolaters, for this custom was frequently associated

with idolatry. After this follow the laws relative to leprosy, that most dangerous disease of hot climates, with which the Jews were visited even on their journey through the wilderness. The laws on this subject were composed with as tender a compassion for the unhappy beings who had fallen into it, as they were wisely ordered to prevent contagion. To us who are free from this noxious disease, these laws appear in their great copiousness as perhaps unnecessary, but to the Jews they were the greatest act of benevolence. The other ordinances about uncleanness, chap. xv. those in particular relating to lying-in-women, chap. xii. The laws as to persons who had touched the body of a dead man, Numb. xix. 11, 16, or a dead animal, Lev. xi. 39; in like manner, the law as to impurity of vessels, Lev. xi. 33, these all were designed to promote corporeal cleanness, which, in hot climates, is more indispensable to health than in colder; and because they were elevated to the place of religious commands, they were calculated at the same time to call attention to internal purity.

The second half of the book, chap. xvi.—xxvii. contains laws not much connected together, partly repeated, and partly single, more copiously treated at a later period; sometimes the laws relating to sacrifice are more nearly defined, sometimes they were warned anew against idolatry, sometimes were laws delivered respecting agriculture and the vine, sometimes moral precepts were given, and in the end blessings are promised to true obedience, and the divine curse is threatened against transgressors. But the most important of these laws are the prohibitions of marriage among near relations, chap. xviii. and 20, x 23; and the laws concerning the feasts to be celebrated, xvi. and 23, both merit a more minute consideration.

In the laws of Moses, marriage is forbidden between a father and daughter, a son and mother, (also a stepmother) a brother and sister, (even if it were only a step-sister, (a grand-father and grand-daughter,

between nephews and aunts, father-in-law and daughter-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law, when yet there were children of the first marriage living, a father and a step-daughter, also step-grand-daughter, between a man and the sister of his wife yet living. Almost among all people we find marriage forbidden among those related, sometimes in a nearer, sometimes in a more remote degree, so that we may consider this point even as a peculiar law of nature. Indeed, without this law it is impossible to prevent the influence of the earliest enticements to depravity, the consequence of which would be, that domestic life, from which the value of public life emanates, would be polluted and destroyed. By conduct of this kind, the earlier inhabitants of Canaan had sinned, and were spued as it were out of the land which they had polluted by their abominations. For this very reason, we Christians, hold this part of the ceremonial law to be of continual obligation.

If a religion be designed to be introduced into the life of the people and the community, it requires above all to have feasts. By these the principal truths of religion take a firm hold of the memory. By meeting together at solemn feasts, a community of people acquire a fraternal feeling to each other, and learn to recognize each other as united by the holiest bond. Finer, more appropriate and heart-stirring feasts there cannot be than the Christian. They remind even the person who is otherwise little employed with the reading and hearing of the divine word, in a succession perpetuated by the ecclesiastical year, of the most important and richest facts in the life of Jesus; they are as it were a living book of time, as it were the temples which stand in the way of the wanderer, and invite him into the building. As the year, in its revolutions, points to the Creator of heaven and earth, so points in like manner the Christian ecclesiastical year in more beautiful revolutions, to the clearer revelation of himself. Yet even the Jewish feasts present a lively as-

pect, and are to the Christian the more important, as they have an undeniable similarity to the Christian feasts.

Above all, Moses commanded the feast of the seventh day to remind them, that God created the world in six days, and then rested from his labour, Gen. ii. 3. Thus this continually returning feast-day reminded the Israelites of the fundamental truth of judaism, that there is one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and this holy day was a weekly acknowledgement of faith in him. The transgression of this command was therefore considered as idolatry, and punished with death. Christians, have beyond question from the days of the apostles, appointed instead of this a day to remember that which has been consecrated as a new spiritual creation, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Besides the weekly festivals, the Jews had a monthly one, namely, of the new moon, which was not observed according to the strictness of the original institution, Numb. x. 10, but only solemnized in bringing a particular offering.

After this there are still four high feasts brought forward, above all, the passover, Lev. xxiii. 4—14, continuing from the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, for seven days, of which the first and last were solemnized as particularly holy. The marks of this feast, were the slaying of the lamb, the eating the lamb in a travelling habit, and in an erect posture; all this was intended to remind them of the wonderful preservation of the first-born of the Israelites in Egypt, and of the deliverance vouchsafed the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. Besides, there was also a spring feast, in which they gave thanks to God for the blessings of the land; and presented to him, accordingly, the first ears as a thank-offering. The Christian celebrates a still more beautiful passover: There is also for him a feast of freedom from the dominion and misery of sin, the feast of victory over death and the grave, there is the spiritual feast of spring, in which Jesus is represented to God, as the first fruits of them that slept.

The feast of the great eternal sacrifice for the sin of the world, no more to be solemnized every year in the slaughter of the paschal lamb, which was only a dark prefiguration. Fifty days later followed the feast of Pentecost, which, as appears even from this designation of time, and from Deut. xvi. 12, was designed to remind them of the solemnization of the law at Sinai. From the other ordinances concerning the same matter, Lev. xxiii. 20, 22, we see that it was at the same time the feast of ingathering the harvest. It continued only a day; as it was the festival of the promulgation of the law, so the Christian solemnizes the feast of Pentecost. The first operation of the Holy Spirit to extend the gospel. As the former was an earthly feast, relating to the gathering of the harvest, so this is for Christians a spiritual harvest, as it calls to their recollection the thousands who, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the preaching of Peter, had been won to the standard of the cross. The first day of the month Tisrì was announced by the sounding of trumpets, Lev. xxiii. 23, as the first day of the civil year, besides, it was designed to be a preparation for the feast of expiation, which was to take place ten days after. This was a feast, which by its significant ceremonies, pointed to the want of an expiation; it is described particularly and copiously, Lev. xvi. and corresponds with our day of humiliation; a day whereby we are reminded of a perfect priest and a valid sacrifice. Five days after followed the lovely feast of tabernacles, which continued for seven days, and was designed to remind them that their forefathers in the wilderness had dwelt in tents; and besides, it was a religious festival in reference to the gathering in the fruits and the vintage, Lev. xxiii. 34, 44. No feast was solemnized so joyously as this; whilst it endured, the Israelites dwelt in tents, they were covered with branches of trees, and carried them round about amid loud demonstrations of joy. At a later period certain other feasts were added; the feast of Purim, the occa-

sion of which is narrated, Esther ix. 29, and the dedication of the temple, 1 Macc. iv. 59. John x. 22.

In the 25th chap. Moses gave, besides, two very remarkable ordinances; but which it would appear were not observed in the following time, Lev. xxv. 34, and 2d Chron. xxxvi. 21, namely, the laws relative to the sabbatical and jubilee years. In the former, which was to be every seventh year, the land must lie waste, and what was spontaneously produced, belonged to the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. In the 49th or jubilee year, the case was not only the same, but the people were required to set free their purchased slaves, and even all goods which had been purchased were given back to their original possessors or their heirs; this ordinance was in nowise unjust, whilst the price of the goods was accommodated to the longer or shorter distance of time from the jubilee year, but it was rather beneficial, because, on the one side, it prevented individuals from becoming poor, and, on the other, a disproportion in the relation of individuals to each other. The ground on which Moses was instructed to frame these two laws was, that God is the Lord of the soil, who had assigned to the Israelites only the use of it.

THE FOURTH BOOK OF MOSES.

This book has been called Numbers, as there is given an account in chapters i. and xxvi. of two numberings of the Israelites, in the second and fortieth years of their wandering. Its contents consist of ordinances, the most important of which have been announced in the foregoing book, and of history. The way and manner in which the latter is here described, has something striking. Many readers would perhaps have expected to see the history of the Israelites in their wanderings through the wilderness, of which the second book has related the occurrences only of the first year, carried through the remaining 39 years,

But it is not so. Our book, indeed, describes the

occurrences of the second year, *e. g.* the numbering the Israelites; the celebration of the first passover; the departure out of the wilderness of Sinai; many revolts of the people which were happily silenced and punished; the sending forth the spies to obtain accurate accounts respecting the land of Canaan, and the impression which these accounts made on the people; but here the narrative is broken off, and it is only remarked that God had permitted the faint-hearted Israelites to continue forty years long in the wilderness; inasmuch as they, on hearing the exaggerated report as to the fortification of the cities and strength of the inhabitants, had forgotten all the great things and miracles which God had done amidst them, and desired to return again to Egypt.

None of all the adults who had come out of Egypt were permitted to enter the promised land, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb; who alone had maintained fortitude of mind. The people having degenerated, through long slavery in the land of Egypt, were unfit for the honour of becoming the people of God. A new generation, which had grown up under freedom, and accustomed from earliest youth to new religious instruction, was necessary, and a people of this kind God trained up for himself in the wilderness. The writers of the New Testament have not neglected to lay before us the rich lessons of wisdom which this fact imparts; insomuch as therein is shown a warning example, of a whole generation who, through their own stiff-neckedness, sunk into misery, Rev. x. 5—12. Heb. iii. 7, 8, and xv. 19.

Of their continuance in the wilderness for the remaining years, nothing more is narrated, than the names of the places where the Israelites encamped, chap. xxxiii. until a very copious history begins anew, with the very memorable fortieth year; from the xx. chapter and onward. That all the other circumstances mentioned in this book took place in the last year, is manifest by a comparison of the two passages, chap. xx. 28, and chap. xxxiii. 38, there Moses relates par

ticularly as testimonies of the divine help, the victories which his people gained over the neighbouring nations, as they passed onward in the midst of conflicts. In vain did the mighty lords of the Amorites and Midianites withstand them, in vain did the king of Moab call on Balaam to curse the people God had blessed. Not to be stopped, they pressed forward, as far as the borders of the promised land. It must have been more obvious, both to the surrounding nations and to the Israelites, by the occurrence with Balaam, what design God had in view by them.

FIFTH BOOK OF MOSES.

Moses perceived, through a divine revelation, that his end was drawing nigh; and whilst he would use still the last moments of his busy active life, he repeated in affecting terms, the most important of his laws, and reminded the people of the benefits which God had shown them hitherto. This is the subject of the fifth book; which, on this account, is called *Deuteronomy*, or a repetition of the law. First, he reminded them of the many victories which they had gained over hostile armies, chap. i.—iii. Then of the giving the law at Sinai; where, in particular, the ten commandments are repeated, iv.—vii., after this, he reminded them of the many errors, because of which the Israelites least of all deserved more extraordinary benefits; and of their own well-being, which, according to the ordination of Providence, could only stand in connection with sincere allegiance to God, viii.—xi.; thereupon he repeated many of the most important commandments, for the most part only those which required to be known by all the people: passing the particular laws which referred chiefly to the priests, xii.—xxvi. And, finally, he laid before them, in the most striking possible manner, blessings and curses, life and death, xxvii.—xxx. Now Moses committed the book to the priests, in order to preserve it in the ark of the testimony; and to read it in the hearing of all the people, every seventh year

during the feast of tabernacles, xxxi. 9. He appointed Joshua in his place, xxxi. 23, and comprised the most important views in a solemn ode, chap xxxii. which all were commanded to learn by heart, and at his departure blessed the people chap. xxxiii., yet he was permitted to see, from the top of a mountain, that land to the borders of which he had conducted his people, after wandering forty years, and amid many storms, and which land his feet would never tread upon. What feelings may have here taken possession of his soul, and what prayers may have ascended from his soul ! Then he died. No monument marked the place where this man of God found his last repose ; so that he who had constantly been zealous against all idolatry might not even in the grave himself give occasion to it. But a better monument was raised to him, in the hearts of his people ; and the esteem of all nations, who venerate the one God and Creator, concerning whom he imparted information, and from whom he received power and inspiration, and who, in this divine instructor, recognize the greatest messenger, who restored again in the old world the faith in one God ; the great law-giver, who made the worship of this one God without images the religion of a people, and who had laid a foundation for an arrangement, through which, the highest revelation of God would be spread abroad, and become the religion of the world.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

This book stands in very close connection with the books of Moses, and is a continuation of the history from the period at which it terminates in the latter, namely, the death of Moses. According to the most usual opinion, it was composed by Samuel or in his time, or rather out of old documents which, for the most part, may have descended from Joshua himself. A glance teaches this. It naturally distributes itself into three portions. In the first, is narrated the history of the conquest of the land, chap. i.—xii. In the

second. the distribution of it, xiii.—xxii. and in the third, the departure of Joshua from the people, xxiii. xxiv. of this the two latter parts must have proceeded from Joshua. Of the departure, it may be observed, chap. xxiv.—xxvi. it was written out by Joshua himself, and the middle portion, which contains as it were the ever legal register of the nation ; it cannot have been composed at another time. A bare oral tradition would not have been sufficient, and would have given continual occasion to disputes, xiii. 7. Joshua the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, was the true servant of Moses. and received from him the name Joshua, he was heretofore called Hosea, Numb. xiii. 8 ; xi. 23. Soon after the departure out of Egypt, he was chosen to be leader of the army against the Amalekites, Exod. xvii. 16 ; he alone was permitted to go up with Moses to the top of Sinai, Exod. xxiii. 13 ; he was one of the twelve spies, and the only one, along with Caleb, who did not lose courage and faith, Numb. xiii. 9 ; because of this, he only was permitted to enter the promised land, whilst all the rest perished in the wilderness. Moses, in a solemn manner, appointed him his successor, Numb. xxvii. 19 ; he exercised his office faithfully as this book proves, until he died at last 110 years old, and was buried in his own inheritance at Timnath Serah in Ephraim.

The history of this book is briefly the following : After God himself had confirmed Joshua in his office, and the people had vowed obedience to him, chap. i. first he sent spies to Jericho, chap. ii. then he conducted the people in a miraculous manner dry-shod through Jordan, chap. iii.—x. and encamped at Gilgal, where the Israelites born since the departure from Egypt were circumcised. Then the Israelites solemnized the first passover in the land, chap. v. The two most important frontier towns were after this destroyed, the former by a visible interposition of the Almighty, chap. vii. viii. but the great city Gibeon acted craftily, and obtained a league with the Israelites, chap. ix. Scarcely had five kings of the Amorites, in the south part of the land, united against the Israelites, having heard of their

mighty victories, when they were cut off in a remarkable slaughter, which was distinguished by a mighty miracle: and their towns, Makeda, Libna, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Deber, destroyed. Hereby the half of the land came under the power of Joshua, and only the northern part remained in the hands of the old inhabitants. But this state of matters did not long continue, as they hastened on their own destruction. On an invitation from one of their mightiest chiefs, a countless army united, and was decisively vanquished at the sea of Merom, chap. xii. The conquest of their many strong places took indeed a long time, chap. xi. 18, 19. Israel had now settled completely in the land, and obtained an absolute hold of it; but still the old inhabitants had possession of many places in the mountains, fortified places, numerous caves throughout the land, and especially on the sea-coasts. Also the zeal of the people began to cool in the pursuit of victory, and Joshua felt the infirmities incident to old age. It must have appeared proper now to divide the land, as far as it was conquered or not; and to commit to the single tribes the task of driving out the Canaanites who still remained in the places assigned to each.

This also God commanded, xiii. 1. The tribes of Reuben, of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, had already obtained of Moses, by particular request, their portion on the other side of Jordan, which was particularly adapted for the feeding of cattle, and the Levites were to be distributed among all the tribes. For the latter and the remaining tribes, Joshua, together with the high priest Eleazar and the elders had to provide. First, their portions were assigned by lot; to the two most powerful tribes, those of Judah and Joseph (or to Ephraim, together with the still remaining half tribe of Manasseh); to the former, towards the south; to the latter in the midst of the land; and truly so fruitful were these districts, that in their condition the blessings spoken of by Jacob. Gen. xlix. 8—12, and 22—26, and by Moses, Deut. xxxiii. 7 and 13, were fulfilled to the letter. A long time was yet ne-

cessary for dividing the land among the other tribes, which remained in the camp of Gilgal, or which roamed hither and thither with their flocks through the land. Above all, Joshua removed the camp to Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, and erected there the tabernacle of testimony; placed in the midst of the land, and seen far and wide. This lovely mountain was fitted to keep the sanctuary of the nation for many centuries (namely, until the time of David). On this occasion, Josh. xviii. 10, the division of the other portions of the land was completed.

Here is the place to cast a look on the natural condition of this fair and richly gifted land, and which is to us the more considerable, as it was the residence of Jesus.

On the west, it was bounded by the Mediterranean sea, against which it sometimes stretches out bold steep rocks as promontories, which sometimes slope down into lovely declivities. Great and opulent cities lay on its borders, which afforded opportunity for trade; and which presented the greatest hindrances in the way of enemies who might invade on that side; but the Israelites had never taken possession of all these cities as it was the positive command of God; the upper ones continued always in the hands of the Phœnicians, and lower ones were continually claimed by hereditary enemies of the people, the Philistines. Towards the south, the wilderness of Kadesh and Mount Seir, formed an almost impassible border. The border towards the east, according to the original adjustment of Moses, was formed by the Dead Sea and the river Jordan, which emptied itself into this sea; yet he permitted the above named two and a half tribes to remain on the other side of Jordan, with rich regions there adapted for pasture; probably they passed to and fro over the country with their flocks, so far as it could be used, until it became farther towards the east an unfruitful waste, through want of water; but which presented a great barrier against every hostile invasion on that side. In fine, towards the north, the

far extended ridge of hills called Lebanon, formed a natural rampart. The size of the land was different at different places. Its greatest extent from north to south did not exceed 70 leagues; and from east to west did not exceed 40; the foreign possessions in the time of David and Solomon are not reckoned, as they were not long maintained.

The situation of the country is happy. It unites, so pretty is the land, the agreeableness of the temperate regions with the advantages of the hot. The hot winds from the deserts of Arabia, are rendered mild through the westerly breezes from the sea, or by the cool air which descends from the snow-clad summits of Lebanon. The alternation of the seasons is not so cutting or sharp as with us. In October, with which month the Jews began their year, the colder season begins with rain, (the so-called early rain,) and the perched land is thereby made ready for the reception of the seed. Later there falls some snow, but without continuing long. As early as in February it begins to feel warm, and the fruit-trees stand in full blossom. With March is introduced a rain called the latter rain, which continues for many weeks: but, from this time it rains but seldom. In April the hot season begins, and at the end of it harvest commences. From June to September the heat increases, which is but seldom interrupted by rains and tempests; in place of these, the parched ground finds a sufficient compensation in the long and cool nights, and the very plentiful dews.^a By these means the land overflowed with wine, oil, corn, and fruit of every kind. The palm, fig, almond, and pomegranate tree adorned it; many houses were surrounded with clusters of grapes, supported by props; the very mountains, through the diligence of the inhabitants, became covered with earth, and fruitful. They presented a lovely spectacle; whole mountains were to

^a It is known that in countries nearer the equator, the length of the day and night is not so widely different as in countries remote from it.

be seen adorned with willow and olive trees, between which lay valleys with fruitful acorns and rich pasturage: forests of cedars, palm, and oak trees afforded venison as well as necessary timber. The sweet plants attracted such multitudes of bees every where, that it has been said, most truly, the land flowed with milk and honey. The sea, and the sea of Gennesaret in particular, furnished numerous fish of all kinds. Such a land Moses had promised, Deut. viii. 9, and Israel must bear witness that not a word failed of all the good things which God had said, Josh. xxiii. 14. Now, indeed, the land is different, and shows, in its deep deterioration, on many sides, that it has become a desolate wilderness. The country was divided, by Joshua, into twelve provinces, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. One tribe, Levi, was scattered among the other tribes. But, on the contrary, the descendants of Joseph were formed into two tribes. Under the kings it became divided into two parts, namely, Judah, which comprehended the tribes of Judah and Benjamin: and Israel, or the kingdom of the ten tribes. After the Babylonish captivity, and at the time of Jesus, it consisted of four provinces, Judea, towards the south; Samaria, in the midst; Gallilee towards the north, particularly important to the Christian, and Jericho, beyond the Jordan, towards the east; when Joshua had thus divided the land, the word of promise was fulfilled, and Abraham's posterity were put in possession of the country upon which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had walked, and where they had erected so many altars to the Lord their God. God made use of them as instruments in punishing a people sunk in the most abominable idolatries and wickedness, and exalted them to the honour of being his people. They must have felt that a similar fate to what they prepared for others awaited themselves, should they degenerate into similar depravity.

Our book gives occasion to a remark, which has frequently been confirmed, concerning the plan of

divine providence. Much as we perceive extraordinary, and given by God, at the beginning, namely, at the passage through Jordan; in the taking of Jericho, and in pressing dangers; particularly in the battles against the five kings of the Amorites, and against the northern princes, yet the book of Joshua mentions nothing of later miracles in favour of the Israelites: The very same thing is the case in the history of Moses. The first year was full of the most diverse and most important revelations of God, and of miracles; but of the thirty eight years which followed, with the exception of feeding the people by manna given of God each day, nothing extraordinary is mentioned. By this it is evident that God interposes, even in the most difficult beginnings, by extraordinary operations of his providence; but then he leaves matters to proceed in their ordinary way, as if he would signify that men should do their part when God had done his. Nevertheless, his eye watches over them, and he guides all events according to his purpose: so was it in the case of Jacob, of Neah; and so was it even in the most perfect revelation of himself in Christianity. Though the life of Jesus, particularly in the last three years, was full of miracles of all kinds; though the Apostles also performed many, yet we must go from them to its ordinary progress, and whatever great and glorious things Jesus has hitherto done in his church, he has brought about by natural means. We need only think of the reformation, and the affair of missions; for the extraordinary work of the Almighty does not require more expenditure of power than for the performance of the ordinary; and the ordinary providence requires to be contemplated no less than manifestations of miraculous power. The finger of God is more easily discernible in the latter, but the omnipresent God is equally efficacious, equally near in the former. How truly, then, should the worshipper of God attain to an independent agency, to trust even where one does not see; to a pure love which, to its continuance, does not depend on outward manifesta-

tions; to fidelity, to patience, to watchfulness, and to a longing which is susceptible of viewing futurity and enjoying it amid disappointment? If the course of providence did not step back, as it were, occasionally, into obscurity, of what good would it be to abide by faith?

THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

This book comprises the history of more than three centuries, and appears plainly from the end of the book to have been compiled by Samuel, in part, at least, out of old written documents. It has its name from the principal subject of which it treats.

In the introduction, chap. i.—ii. is narrated how the Israelites fell into idolatry and gross crimes soon after the death of Joshua, and those who had witnessed the wonderful doings of God, and that, as a righteous judgment, God gave them over for a time to their enemies, and to chastisement. In the following chapters of this book, iii.—xvi. we have the history of the judges or captains, narrated in some places briefly, others copiously. These were men called and strengthened of God, sometimes from this, sometimes from that tribe, who, by divine succour, delivered the nation from its enemies and oppressors at that time, rooted out idolatry, often restored again the worship of God, which had fallen into disuse; and even till the end of their lives were considered as the presidents of the nation, or also of a particular tribe. After the death of a judge, the Israelites usually fell again under the dominion of their enemies, until a new judge arose, and, during the life of the judge, they were again made free. This state of matters continued alternately for centuries; during which, on their disobedience and falling into idolatry, they were again visited with punishment, again on their repentance and return to God they experienced help. Of some judges little more is mentioned than the name, of others again account is given more fully, and even circumstances connected with their birth are recorded. The most distinguished of the

judges were Gideon, Jephtha, and Sampson ; a female judge also, Deborah, is mentioned.

Almost every people has to run a similar period, as did the Israelites of this time ; it has been called with justice the heroic age of the Israelitish people. Still many warlike Canaanites remained in the land, who boasted of their strongly fortified walls, and iron weapons, the conflict with whom affected the highest interests of the nation ; its existence and independence. Yet the mass of the people took little interest in the earnest carrying on of the conflict. Whether it was cowardice in the people, or whether it was wish for repose, after so long wanderings through the wilderness, or whether incapacity to bear prosperity in the fruitful land,—one thing is certain, the people sacrificed their freedom to repose ; early they sank into disorder and ruin, in their united capacity, disunion prevailed, the tribes separated from each other, each considered its own interest : scarcely were great dangers sufficient to unite some of them in a covenant : with the removal of the danger they again separated. Only in some few nobler souls the heavenly spark continued to glimmer, touched at the call of God, it burst out into a clear flame, which warmed again into unusual energy the cold hearts of a slavish people. The most distinguished of these were of martial courage and unusual strength, of cunning in finding out, and destroying the enemy in connection with the sharp-sightedness of the general. All these sentiments were ennobled and elevated through the consciousness of having a call from God ; under whose assistance they were to fight for his honour and his people.

The conclusion of the book consists of a double appendix, chapters xvii.—xviii. and xix.—xxi. in which two occurrences are mentioned, which soon must have taken place after the death of Joshua, and show us the people under a very disadvantageous point of view.

In the consideration of the divine plan, this book also has its significance. It develops the same, indeed, but in a slow manner, the nation itself appears

during the lapse, and, at the end of the long period, whose history is here narrated, not only to have advanced no further, but (in consequence of their own guilt), to have retrograded towards the generation which Joshua had led to the conquest of the land. The divine plan, which comprehends thousands of years to our view, appears slow in its development; but we, the creatures of a moment, are not permitted to measure the designs of the Eternal, 2 Peter iii. 8, 9. As the noblest trees require to their growth the longest period, so also the kingdom of God. The generation belonging to this period, which is described in this book, was called forth, not so much on its own account, as being a link in a great chain, in which the revelations of God were always more clearly being developed, the better was not yet come: there was only the preparation for it. To us who cannot now contemplate the entire connexion from the first obscure beginning to the most glorious revelation of the Son of God, this apparent tediousness cannot seem strange; but the generation of that age could not have gone astray otherwise than by its own culpability towards its God and Lord. For although the plan of God proceeded to no higher step for a long time; yet it showed itself how far it had already reached, according to its full power and efficacy. When, after so long a period, the plan of God had raised human nature to no higher position, yet the effect it had on some individuals, shows the elevation to which it is calculated to raise, when allowed to operate in its full power and efficacy. Apostacy into idolatry was always followed by all manner of punishment, a return to the true worship of God could, on all occasions, only be promoted through the visible assistance of God. Even the frequent repetition of these cases, which remained pretty nearly alike for substance, but which, in their particular circumstances, manifested the riches of the divine assistance by great variety, must have shewn how earnest God is with his purposes, and since the obstinate people had neglected to shew themselves the foster-people of

God, by obedience and prosperity, their adverse fortunes standing always in connexion with unbelief and disobedience, must have afforded a strong testimony to the being and providence of God. By these leadings it was also obvious, that God would never force men, but guide, advance, assist, and then leave them their free choice, whether they are inclined to obey to their welfare, or to disobey to their detriment.

THE BOOK OF RUTH.

This little book contains a family history : Many of which we find also in the history of the patriarchs, and we read this book with double satisfaction, after the books immediately preceding, which narrated mournful wars, transgressions, and chastisements. Hitherto we have seen the nation only in its collective capacity, now we behold it depicted in the domestic relations of individuals ; and only by such representations can the internal life of a people be understood and conceived. Indeed, it does us double good, at a time agitated by storms, and so remarkable by defection from the laws of Moses, to meet for once, with a genuine Israelite without guile, and with a state of domestic life distinguished by happiness. Some things may not appear becoming according to our customs and manners, but we must judge according to the manners of the Jews, and of the time. The conduct in the instance here before us was confirmed by a particular law of Moses, Deut. xxv. 5, 9. Besides, without this law, the whole history is unintelligible. All in this book is the genuine Israelitish ; for example, the judicial transaction at the gate, chap. iv. 7, 8 ; the custom or gleaning in the harvest season, as mentioned chap. ii. 15, 16. The congratulations on the occasion of the marriage, chap. iv. 11, 12, reminding us of the patriarchs. What made this book peculiarly important to the Israelites, was the light which it cast on the family register of David, the great grandson of Boaz and Ruth. The heart

uniformly beat high, when it thought of the kingdom of David, and of David's son. Accordingly we find Ruth in the genealogy of our Lord. This honour was conferred on this Moabitess; inasmuch as, in true attachment to her deceased husband, his mother, and their God, she forsook her own idolatrous worship, and even her native country. God is rich to compensate our sacrifices for him, Mark x. 29.

THE TWO BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

These two books embrace the history of the two last judges. Eli and Samuel, and the two first kings, Saul and David. Though the latter only is discoursed of copiously, the narrative concerning the former partakes more of the nature of family history. Our books have their name, inasmuch as they commence with the birth of Samuel. According to the general opinion, he was the author of the first twenty-four chapters, and the remaining portions were added by the prophets Nathan and Gad. This much, at least, is certain, that these three have written the history of David, 1 Chron. xxx. 29. On a more minute inspection it is evident that these books are made up of single sections.

Book I. chapters i.—vii. contains an account of the circumstances connected with the youth of Samuel; of his education in the house of Eli; of the ruin of Eli's family, and of the judicial office of Samuel. Chapters viii.—xvi., relate the history of Saul, from his appointment to be king to the period of his rejection by God. From chapter xvii. to xxx., we have the exploits and expeditions of David, before his entrance on government by the final overthrow of Saul's reign.

Book I. chap. xxxi.—Book II., to chap. xxiv., contains the history of David's reign. These facts are repeated again in the books of Chronicles, in this respect we may compare

1 Samuel, Chap. xxxi.	1 Chron. x. 1—12.
2 Samuel, ——— v. 1—10.	———— xi. 1—9.

2 Samuel Chap. vi. 3—11	1 Chron. xiii. 1—14.
— vii.	— xvii.
— viii.	— xviii.
— x.	— xix.
— xi. 1.	— xx. 1.
— xii. 30, 31.	— xx. 2, 3.
— xxi. 18—22.	— xx. 4—8.
— xxiii. 8—39	— xi. 10—40.
— xxiv.	— xxi.

This latter and more comprehensive section, moves on in a visible order.

1. The death of Saul, and David's behaviour on the occasion, 1 Sam. xxxi. 2 Sam. i.

2. David's wars before his possession of the throne. The death of Abner and Ishobeth, 2 Sam. ii.—iv.

3. David's ascending the throne, 2 Sam. v.

4. His solicitude for religion and divine worship, 2 Sam. vi.—vii.

5. His wars, 2 Sam. viii.—x.

6. His grievous sin and consequent repentance, 2 Sam. xi.—xii.

7. Misfortunes in his family, xiii.—xviii.

8. His restoration to his kingdom, xix.—xxi.

9. David's song of praise, xxi.

10. The conclusion, xxii.—xxiv.

When we consider the history of God's people in these books, we find them at the beginning of them sunk in the lowest moral degradation. Then rising under the protection of God, always higher and higher, and ever more failing of that highest step (which, alas! was maintained only for a short time) of true respect for God and earthly prosperity which are described in the first book of Kings. The conduct of Providence in relation to his people is different here from what it had been at the time of the Judges. New promises relative to the distant future were now given; the nation awakes out of its indolent slumbers; kings arise, and along with them prophets, few of whom had appeared since the time of Moses. The Judges, distinguished chiefly by bodily strength and martial courage, had often indeed freed the people from grievous bon-

dage and idolatry; but they had contributed little to the revival of the Mosaic religion, and did not preserve the people from apostacies; even when the office of Judge fell into the hands of the priest Eli, and the two highest dignities were united in his person, such was the decline of the religious spirit; into its place came a mere ceremonial service, which the selfishness of the priests favoured; and the nation sunk into so deep degradation, that even the ark of the covenant fell into the hands of enemies. Eli in character was an upright honest man,—a man full of piety, full of concern for the national religion, full of patriotism,—a man whom the loss of the ark grieved more than the losses in his own family; but it was his failing that he treated his unadvised sons with excessive tenderness; and instead of serious correction, he only employed soft reproofs and entreaties, which did not avail. They having used the sacred office wholly for selfish purposes, brought it into contempt with the people; and through the extinction of all sense of religion, the cherishers of which they should have been, they brought the greatest misfortunes on the nation in which they, their father, and the people, perished together. At that time, in Samuel God raised up a man whose equal had not appeared since Moses,—not a warrior, but a man full of spirit and power, serious and strict, who would not yield in the smallest matter where the law of God was concerned, full of enthusiasm for the true weal of the nation, and with the offices of priest and judge, uniting at the same time the prophetic spirit. All Israel acknowledged him as such, iii. 20. From this time God manifested himself frequently, iii. 21. The ark of the covenant came back, vi. 1. The people renounced idolatry, vii. 4, and gained victory over their enemies, vii. 13.

In the old age of Samuel, when his sons governed unrighteously, the people desired a king, being misguided by the example of neighbouring nations, God permitted them to gratify this desire, though in one respect he disapproved of it. The constitution of the

state became by this a kingdom only in a more comprehensive sense, so that God was considered as king. In this there was no contradiction, though an earthly ruler was called by his name, so long as he was a true servant of God, and considered himself as his representative. Moses, of old, had said nothing against a king being chosen, Deut. xvii. 14, and God now permitted it; but, at the same time, as a proof that he was in a peculiar sense the king of this nation, he reserved to himself the right of nominating the human king. But, nevertheless, the desire of the people merited disapprobation, as in their low manner of thinking, they had no sense of the higher dignity of the heavenly King. They could not reckon on the circumstance, that their kings would be always influenced by a sense of duty, and feel continually their dependance on God, as was illustrated in the example of their first king. So much the more necessary was an institute to keep the king in mind of his duty, and that the people themselves might be able to cherish faith in their invisible but heavenly King. For that purpose the priesthood was not sufficient, for, since the mere administration of ceremonies was intrusted to them, they often required something to revive the religious spirit. Even history shows how ungodly kings had themselves the co-operation of the priests in their oppressions of the people. For that reason God chose prophets, in order to counteract, by these inspired men, partly the caprice of the kings, partly the formal worship of the priests, whilst they should demand to the spiritual worship of God, and prepare by degrees for the greatness which futurity had in reserve. By all these means the divine arrangements obtained a quite different form, and one which is much more obvious. The three dignities, that of prophet, priest, and king, were recognized as essential in the Jewish state; and it gives us joy to find these offices again united in a yet higher sense in Christ. As under Moses the law was added to the promise as a new step in the developement of divine revelation, so there came now in addition to the promise, and the

law the prophecy, which the first explained, and the latter spiritualized. We find, in like manner, at the beginning, the kings and prophets sometimes in harmony with each other, sometimes also hostile, just as the former listened to the word of the Lord; and as in the time of the Judges, so now, earthly prosperity followed their faith and obedience, misfortune of every kind attended their faithlessness and disobedience.

Even Saul's government, without doubt, did not correspond to the universal wish. At the beginning, indeed, so long as God was with him, he delivered the people from the dominion of the Philistines, and infused into them again that self-confidence, and that martial spirit, which, during their dependance on a strange people, were wholly lost. But all this changed when Saul had forfeited the favour of God. In opposition to the express command of the Lord, who had called him to the throne, he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites. One cannot say that human compassion prevented him from this action which was commanded, because neither then, nor yet at a later period, did he show pity to others. And, indeed, it sounds like an empty excuse which Saul offered in justification of his conduct, that he yielded to the wishes of the people, when he had taken no counsel in any other matter than the suggestions of his own mind. Also of the booty, Saul consecrated to God only the bad and the useless, whilst he kept the good for himself, 1 Sam. xv. 7. His crime was, that he would reign independent of God, who had called him to the throne.

From this time forward the blessing of God departed from him, and though the recollection of his former acts, and the favour of the people, maintained him some years on the throne, yet we see him, from this time forward, falling into crimes which excite our abhorrence, and into a frame of mind which calls forth our sympathy. A mixture of contrary qualities makes him the subject of its capricious sport. At one time

he is gentle and tender, at another time harsh and cruel; at one time you behold him courageous to temerity, again faint-hearted to despair; now you behold him full of energy, at another time lazy and slow, not moved to any thing of himself, but acting from momentary impulse and outward circumstances. The unhappy man, who doubtless, in his original lowness of condition, had entertained right feelings, must have been now sensible of the care and miseries of the throne. Raised to the very pinnacle of human ambition, he felt nevertheless only the bitterness that can be connected with it. He could not bear the thought that another was called to his place on the throne. The voice of Samuel continually resounded in his ears; he felt in his inmost soul the sentence of God whereby he was rejected. He could not deny the merit of him who was to succeed him. And, nevertheless, he clung fast to the throne, though it was to him only a place of torment. Envy and mistrust reigned in his soul, his ears stood open to calumny, he was affrighted when there was no danger, and he caused streams of blood to flow because fancy painted crime where there was none. The noble David, who had fought so valiantly for him, and had been set so plainly before him as the successor of his dignity, must fly; fourscore and five priests must fall a sacrifice to his groundless suspicion. The inoffensive Gibeonites, 2 Sam. xxi. 2, must experience the edge of his sword, whilst the hereditary enemies of his country, the Philistines, equipped themselves for a war, in which Saul, forsaken of God, found the end of despair.

It is a fine feature in the character of Samuel, that so long as he lived he mourned for Saul, though he was even obliged to announce to him his rejection, yet he was far from all ill-natured joy at the fall of a man who had been made a king contrary to his original will. Though his conduct towards Saul, in some cases, appears harsh and austere, yet must we consider that this firmness of the prophet became the more necessary by the very choice of a king. Samuel also

did not mix himself up with the civil affairs of the kingdom ; he struggled only for the law ; he desired only strict observance of the divine commands. Samuel possessed that very thing which Saul wanted, a willing implicit subjection, under the commission of God, even when it appeared difficult and injurious. The feature in the character of Samuel, which has been considered severe, is the willing and regardless submission in conveying the will of God to Saul, in relation to his misconduct ; but in this matter he was only in appearance harsh and severe.

The three dignities which, under the mistrustful government of Saul, were never come into proper harmony, appeared in their proper relation to one another under David, who himself possessed the prophetic spirit. He was a man after God's own heart, and even now, at the distance of thousands of years, the religious heart finds refreshment in his psalms. In distress he had obedience and faith. In many occurrences of his youth, he had become acquainted with God as the Mighty One of Israel. The Lord was with him. He subdued the foreign enemies of the people, stilled the intestine mutinies, conquered Jerusalem, and made choice of it to be the capital of his kingdom, and the habitation of the tabernacle, and after the transgression into which he was seduced by passion and ambition, he gave sure proof how deep and heartfelt his repentance was. David not only provided for the outward parts of divine worship whilst he elevated the priesthood, and by the temple music, to which he composed the greatest number of the psalms, but he also presented to the people the picture, never imitated except by the one king, of a pious mind which took willingly from the prophets messages which announced punishment, as knowing they were deserved, and professed openly, without false shame, his adherence to Jehovah. He even went so far as the thought of building a temple at Jerusalem, and was only prevented by the assurances of the prophet Nathan, that the accomplishment of this work was appointed for his son. Yet there is a circumstance

which makes David a very remarkable person in the history of the divine providence. To him the promise was given, 2 Sam. vii. 12, 13, that the kingdom would for ever remain with his family. The Israelite actually looked, from this time onward, especially in troublous times, to the future with longing desire, and the prophets connected all the salvation which they promised with the mention of David's seed, a punishment was predicted to the nearest posterity of David, it need to be pointed out only as temporary, 1 Kings xi. 39.

What once was promised to Abraham, in general, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. What Jacob, on his death-bed, had promised to the tribe of Judah, Gen. xlix. 10, that would now be limited to the particular family of David. Through the election of this family, the human kingly government was brought into strict agreement with the divine kingly government, and consecrated. No more could the latter be forgotten in consequence of the former, only in one whom God had chosen, him the obedient king all good men expected. With these joyous prospects David expresses himself at the commencement of the 23d chap. 2 Samuel. After that Solomon had been chosen, the most worthy of his sons, to be his successor, and to carry on the work which was begun.

THE TWO BOOKS OF KINGS.

These two books contain the history of the period that intervened, from the last years of David to the thirty-seventh year of the Babylonish captivity, consisting of more than five hundred years. During this we behold the nation, under Solomon, first raised to the highest point of religion and terrestrial happiness, but soon after his death it became divided, and fell into a state of great declension—which pious kings were able to prevent for a little time, so far as the kingdom of Judah was concerned, but could not in the case of the kingdom of the ten tribes.

In the interior arrangement of these books, the following sections obviously present themselves:—

a) From chapter i. to xi. is contained a short history of the reign of Solomon. The same comes before us in the books of Chronicles, as is manifest by a comparison of the following portions of these books:—

1 Kings iii. 4—14.	2 Chron. i. 3—13.
— vii. 51;—viii. 50.	— v. 1;—vi. 40.
— viii. 62—63.	— vii. 4—5.
— viii. 64;—ix. 2.	— vii. 8—12.
— ix. 6—9.	— vii. 19—22.
— ix. 17—28.	— viii. 4—18.
— x. 1—28.	— ix. 1—28.

As the history of these books is continued to the Babylonish captivity, it might, perhaps, be thought that the history of the reign of Solomon was first composed at this late period. But this would be a wrong conclusion. Even if the compiler of these books, whose name we do not know, lived at the time of the Babylonish captivity, yet he has himself remarked, that this portion of his book he took out of older books, the Chronicles of Solomon, 1 Kings xi. 41. Without doubt this is the same book which is referred to at 2 Chron. ix. 29, under the title, Chronicles of the Prophet Nathan, and Visions of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the History of Iddo the Seer. By this we learn the history of Solomon was already written, at his time, by the prophets of that age, and we possess that history in the books of Kings and Chronicles. This is shown by single intimations, which must have been written before the Babylonish captivity, 1 Kings viii. 8, and by the copiousness and vividness of many descriptions and expressions.

b) 1 Kings xii. to the xxv. of 2 Kings, contains, with the exception of from 1 Kings xvii.—xix. chapters, and 2 Kings ii. 2—4, the history of the time of the division of the nation into the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. In an order interrupted only by the two intercalations just mentioned, the history of the kings of Israel, at that time, is set before us; and,

in a shorter and more condensed form, the history of the kings of Judah is attached to it. From the time of the downfall of Israel and the government of Hezekiah king of Judah, the history of the latter is given more largely. The same features, on the whole, which mark the histories of David and Solomon, present themselves here, *i. e.*, we find in the books of Chronicles, in substance, a repetition of what we have here. We also find references to older books of history, in as much as the author has quoted fifteen times the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, 1 Kings xiv. 29, and sixteen times the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, (1 Kings xiv. 19). Unquestionably these are the same books, which were quoted in the books of Chronicles, after the names of their authors, the prophets Shemiah, Iddo, Isaiah, &c., 2 Chron. xii. 16; xiii. 22; xxxii. 19. Thus, that which we read in a more advanced part of the books of Kings was originally distinguished by the names of contemporary authors.

c and *d*) In the sections 1 Kings xvii.—xix., and 2 Kings ii.—iv. we find two insertions in the history, the first of which relates the life and actions of the prophet Elijah; the second, the history of his great successor in the prophetic office, Elisha. The biblical history here remains faithful to its fundamental position, that the actions of the man of God, in the department of his office, have more value than the more shining actions of the conqueror.

It is worth while to direct our attention nearer to the principal events which are narrated in these books.

Under Solomon's reign, of forty years, which was almost entirely peaceful, the people enjoyed the fruits of the exertions which had been made under David. The people enjoyed their tranquillity; righteousness protected innocence, and punished guilt; riches and plenty prevailed, 1 Kings x. 21 and 27, commerce with foreign nations flourished, and the fame of the wisdom of Solomon resounded far and wide. As his father had raised the religious condition of the people by his psalms, he raised them, in like manner, by his

moral doctrines and proverbs. A higher object of their wishes scarcely appeared to remain to happy Israel, than that the prosperity of Solomon's reign might be perpetual.

But what has made the memory of Solomon immortal, and given him the distinction he holds in the history of religion, is his building of the temple, which he completed. From Moses to Solomon, the tabernacle of testimony had been the only sanctuary of the nation; since Joshua, it stood on Mount Shiloh, until the ark of the covenant, taken by the Philistines and brought back, after a two years' abode in Kirjath-jearim, was set up by David, beside his palace on Mount Zion, in the conquered Jerusalem. In the four hundred and eightieth year from the departure out of Egypt, 1 Kings vi. 7, Solomon commenced the building of the temple, and had it fully completed after seven years. He had, on an intimation from God, appointed, as the seat of the temple, Moriah, a mount situated in Jerusalem, the place where the angel stood the time of the pestilence in the days of David. This mountain was separated, by a deep valley, from the three remaining ones of the city, viz. Zion, Akra, Bezetha, on the east of which, at a later period, the city was built;—opposite it, on the other side of the valley of Jehosaphat and the Brook Kedron, outside the city, stood the Mount of Olives. From the top of Moriah might be enjoyed a ravishing view of Jerusalem, seated on the three mountains; whilst, from the higher, Zion and the Mount of Olives, could be surveyed the whole magnificence of the temple. As the temple, and still more the wide fore-courts round about it, required a wide plain, so the mountain required to be levelled in some places, but in others to be enlarged, which was done by a very high stone wall, 400 yards high. The surface of the mountain was a square, and so divided, that the space which lay next to the four sides formed the anterior court of the people; which, again, fashioned the immediately succeeding but somewhat higher court of the priests, in midst of which stood the

temple itself. A person first arrived at the fore-court of the people, which had gates on all the four sides. The greatness of these gates may be concluded from the purpose for which they were made, which was, that the whole of Israel should assemble within, on occasion of the great feasts, to express their reverence for God. The great plain, the covered marble colonnade, and the beautiful gates, afforded a lovely view, and gave to the place the appearance of a fore-court about a royal palace. In the midst of it, but somewhat higher, and encompassed by a small wall, with pillars of cedars, lay the second; the fore-court of the priests, esteemed more sacred, and whose occupations could easily be observed from without. The priests only, as the servants of the Divine King, who dwelt in the sanctuary, durst enter this place. Here, too, was the altar of burnt-offerings, on which, daily, the smoke ascended from the sacrifice; here was the molten sea, and the ten vessels of brass which contained water for washing the priests and the parts for sacrifice. In the midst of this court was situated, pretty high, the temple itself, which formed an elongated square, in a great degree after the pattern of the tabernacle of testimony. On the east side of it rose the porch, as high as a tower, with the two remarkable pillars Boaz and Jachin, betwixt which steps conducted into the fore-court. From the fore-court, a passage was into the sanctuary, similar to the ante-room, a large square, in which stood the altar for burnt-incense, and the ten tables with shew-bread. It had not windows, but ten candlesticks affixed to its two sides, each of which contained seven candles, which illumined the awful darkness. From this a door, which stood open, indeed, but was covered over with costly tapestry, conducted into the holy of holies, which the high priest alone was permitted to enter once a year. Here stood the ark of the covenant, as it were the throne of the Heavenly King, under the wings of two great cherubims, overlaid with gold. Here was supposed to be the dwelling-place of God. This was not to be erroneously apprehended. The whole was to be, not a

church, not a house for public edification, but the palace of the divine King himself, where' Jehovah, enthroned and imparting blessings, was worshipped by sacrifice. Solomon himself has said, in his prayer, 1 Kings viii. 27, "But will God, indeed, dwell upon earth? behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded." The temple was to appear only as the place in which God, who revealed himself, permitted himself to be served, and proved himself the hearer of prayer. Thus the nation had a temple to be, as it were, a visible witness for the being of God, and his election of the Israelitish people,—a temple which would unite the tribes of the people; which, also, would direct foreigners to the God of Israel, 1 Kings viii. 41, which, even by its elevated exterior, and the solemn service of the priests, was able, and intended to awaken reverence and devotion.

Alas! these prospects, which Solomon himself and the nation cherished at the dedication of the temple, and so many other hopes which his government excited, were only imperfectly realized. He himself in his old age, when he inclined to idolatry, undermined the good ground, and was the cause why the nation, which he wished very closely to cement, should be rent after his death for centuries. His reign, more brilliant than that of his father, required during its peaceful period almost greater sacrifices than those in a period of continued war. Solomon, educated in a court, stood at a greater distance from the people than David, who had been elevated to the throne from the midst of the people. The old dissension among the tribes, which, through the prudence of David, had been settled, stirred itself the more as the splendour of his throne made the more remote provinces feel only what was oppressive. God had not left himself without a witness, he had warned, he had promised all blessings to honest faith and sincerity, ix. 2, 9, but he would set no restraint upon liberty, passion, and susceptibility. Notwithstanding what man might do, his plan goeth steadily forward. They could only injure themselves. Even

this shows to us this plan in its full greatness, so that even when men appear quite unsusceptible of it, it continues its firm progress forward, and even where it appears to have stopped, it only developes the more gloriously. Often had the Israelites, after a time of true piety, sunk back into idolatry, but they had never been so high in religious attainments as now, therefore had not easily sunk so low as at this time. A long continued prosperity could hardly have been required at any other time, as under Solomon, for the furtherance of the divine plan ; under calamities the Jews for the most part learned to look to God, and anxiously hoped for a future period, of which in their happy days they could not form a conception. Likewise always it was better that the nation should be divided, than that they should remain united under godless kings.

Under Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the kingdom became divided ; only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, composing the kingdom of Judah, remained with him and David's family, yet soon many Levites who had been banished joined him, and the God-fearing out of all the tribes, 2 Chron. xi. 13, 16. His immediate successors also succeeded in conquering some towns in Ephraim, and in drawing to themselves many people out of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. The other ten tribes made choice of Jeroboam, who seduced the people to idolatry in order to prevent them from frequenting the temple at Jerusalem. All their descendants imitated them in this. From the time of Omri, Samaria was the capital of this kingdom. This was a power, which, had it remained united, could have withstood all opposition from without, 2 Chron. xiii. 19 ; xiv. 19 ; but divided, it was exhausted in wars among those who should have stood together. From the xii. chapter we have a parallel account of the two kingdoms and their respective governors. We subjoin a survey of the kings of the two kingdoms, from which it may be seen at the same time which of them reigned contemporaneously. Those whose names are printed in capital letters, reigned in such a manner as to gain the approbation of God.

B. C.	Kings of Judah.	Kings of Israel.
931	1) Rehoboam reigned 17 years	1) Jeroboam reigned 22 years
964	2) Abijam 3	
961	3) ASA 41	
960	. . . . .	2) Nadab 2
959	. . . . .	3) Baasha 24
936	. . . . .	4) Elah 2
934	. . . . .	5) Zimri 7
934	. . . . .	6) Omri 12
923	. . . . .	7) Ahab 22
920	4) JEHOASHAPAT 25	
900	. . . . .	8) Ahazia 2
898	. . . . .	9) Joram 12
895	5) Joram 8	
887	6) Ahaziah 1	
886	. . . . .	10) Jehu 28
886	7) Athalia 6	
880	8) JEHOASH 40	
858	. . . . .	11) Jehoahaz 14
839	. . . . .	12) Joash 16
839	9) AMAZIAH 29	
826	. . . . .	13) Jeroboam 2) 41
811	10) AZARIAH 52	
774	. . . . .	14) Zachariah 6 months
773	. . . . .	15) Shallum 1 month
773	. . . . .	16) Menachem 10 years
762	. . . . .	17) Pekaiiah 2
760	. . . . .	18) Pekah 20
759	11) JOTHAM 16	
743	12) Ahaz 16	
731	. . . . .	19) Hosea 9
727	13) HEZEKIAH 29	
722	Israel ceased to be a kingdom.	
698	14) Manasseh 55	
643	15) Ammon 2	
641	16) JOSIAH 31	
610	17) Jehoahaz 3 months	
610	18) Jehoiakin 11 years	
593	19) Jeconiah 3 months	
598	20) Zedekiah 11 years	

Short as are the historical notices of these kings, it is expressly remarked of each how he conducted himself in reference to religion. Whether he honoured the one true God, or the gods of the neighbouring people. This is altogether in the spirit of the biblical history, every thing else, even great power, the fortunes of war, illustrious actions, *ex. gr.* Jeroboam the Second, appear in it as mere secondary points, whilst religion, and whatever relates to it, is everywhere prominent as the chief thing. Of the twenty kings of Judah, eight governed according to the mind of God, of the nineteen kings of Israel not one. Hence this state, although far greater and more powerful, having been in vain warned by the men of God, as Elijah and Elisha, fell sooner than the lesser one of Judah. Its citizens were carried away by Salmanezer into the Assyrian captivity. But Judah also followed. Even the temple, even the government of pious kings, even the touching sayings of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, could not restrain the people from idolatry and ruin. Under Zedekiah the temple was demolished, Jerusalem destroyed, and now also, not fully one hundred years after the fall of Israel, was carried away into the Babylonish captivity, after Jehoiakim at an earlier period had been carried to Babylon, with the nobles and wealthy persons in addition to the treasures. Thus the people of God seem to have ceased, and even to be deprived of the promised land. God appears to have wholly abandoned them. The interpositions of the Deity on their behalf appear to have been completed, and to have been completed, indeed, in a melancholy manner. So it appeared then, but now time has confirmed what then many of the prophets had taught, that God had not forgotten his people. We know that guilty misfortune of the Jews as a passing important step in the developement of the divine purpose; this very plan lost nothing by it, rather did the carrying away of the Israelites form a part of it, and had been already foretold by Moses, Deut. xxviii. 36. Joshua xxiii. 16. Solomon, 1 Kings ix. 6—9, as a certain consequence in case of

disobedience. As the earlier divine promises had dignified themselves in this people, so now the threatenings had their fulfilment. What in the days of their happiness and freedom, the Jews had not learned, they learned now in suffering and slavery. It is abundantly testified by experience, that the loss of a thing concerning which, when in possession, men were cold-hearted and indifferent, awakens new zeal for it. At the river of Babylon they sat pensive and wept for the God of their fathers. From that time their faith was unshaken, no more did they fall into idolatry. They observed the Mosaic law most strictly; and as they themselves were better and more faithful, so they gave an honourable testimony for God. The three men in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lion's den, gave testimony of their veneration for God, and he by their deliverance testified for them. Cyrus himself, the mightiest monarch of that time, learned to acknowledge the God of the Jews as the only true God, and gave them their freedom, with liberty to return to their own country, and rebuild the temple.

THE TWO BOOKS OF CHRONICLES.

The other Greek name which these books also have, Paralipomena, the gleanings of what remains, is calculated to give us information respecting their contents. They contain, indeed, not a bare gleanings, but an actual continuation of earlier history, and partly a copious repetition, but, however, with important additions, and a short continuation to the end of the captivity. In the first ten chapters there is nothing but family registers of the patriarchs, of the twelve tribes, and of the most distinguished families in them, with single short additions, which must have been of the highest importance to the Jews returned from the captivity. After this, the history of David from the death of Saul, that of Solomon and his successor, is narrated partly word for word with the books of Samuel and of Kings. Much, indeed, that is earlier related, is omitted; but,

on the contrary, much that is new has been inserted. Of the history of the kings of Israel nothing is noticed, except what is of necessity connected with the history of Judah. The latter only is mentioned here, as a sure proof that the Jews then should understand that the purpose of God was carried on almost with the exclusion of Israel by the smaller but more pious kingdom of Judah, whose kings are all, from David to Jehoiakin, found on record in the genealogy of our Lord, Matt. i. 6—11.

It need not surprise us to find the history of so long and remarkable a period twice written, particularly when it is narrated with additions so rich in instruction, and so important, which teach us many things wholly omitted in the preceding books, *ex. gr.* the preparations for building the temple, the new arrangements respecting the orders of the priests and Levites, respecting the allotment of the Levites on the separation of the two kingdoms, concerning the celebration of the passover in the time of King Hezekiah. We do not find any contradiction between these and the early narrations; rather is the judgment of the latter respecting the kings of Judah confirmed by the newly added features. From this it follows, that the peculiarity of our books consists in part in the distinguishing of the kings of Judah, partly also in such narratives as have a reference to the Levitical worship.

According to the common opinion, these books have been ascribed to Ezra, because the book which bears his name commences just as these end, and as the history, which is here broken off, is there continued.

THE BOOK OF EZRA.

This book, as appears from the superscription, was composed by Ezra, the son of Seraiah, of the family of Aaron, also a priest, (vii. 1; vi. 11,) and contains the history of the Israelites at his time. Ezra begins with the permission granted the Jews to return to Jerusalem. It was the purpose of God, that the people he had great-

ly tried and purified, should return again to the land of their fathers,—circumstances also led to this. The mighty Babylon, with its colonists from Judea, fell first under the power of the Medes, and then of Cyrus the Persian. Since the simple religion of the Persians resembled very much that of the Israelites, Cyrus loved these his new subjects, and not only permitted them to return to Palestine, but favoured them also with presents, seventy years after the carrying away of the first captives by Nebuchadnezzar. The first colony of the Jews returned to Palestine, and thus fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah. Ezra indeed was not connected with the first portion of the captive Israelites who were conducted home under Zerubbabel, but he could easily have been informed of the situation of those who had first returned, since, about seventy years later, he had conducted the second journey, and rectified anew the service of God. These persons, in number only two and forty thousand souls, had had nothing to do sooner than setting up the altar of burnt-offering, (which was, however, before the rebuilding of the temple) in order to be able to bring daily sacrifices, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. But the building of the temple, which they afterward undertook, was soon hindered. There was settled in the land a people composed in part of citizens, who still remained in the land, or of such as had returned belonging to the kingdom of Israel, and in part of immigrating heathens who made profession of the Jewish religion. This people, which is known to us by the name Samaritans, claimed also to have a share in the temple, and when this was refused, tried by their calumnies to obtain an edict from the Persian government preventing it. Fifteen years long the building stopped, until the command first given by Cyrus was renewed by Darius. The latter, indeed, was not so beautiful as the former temple, since the people were few, and with all their good-will to contribute, so poor, that we cannot venture at all to compare the dedication of the new temple with that of the old. Even the expenses of the building and the offerings were drawn from the Persian kings. But there

was wanting in this the gold and silver expended on the first temple; there was wanting the ark of the covenant, the sign of the Divine presence, as well as the Urim and Thummim, the spirit of prophecy also soon ceased. Nevertheless, Haggai foretold that the glory of the latter house should be greater than the former, and it consisted in this that Jesus walked in it.

About fifty-five years after the dedication of this temple, Ezra came, vii. 1, with a company not very numerous, viii. 1—14, and with new presents from Artaxerxes, king of Persia, for the encouragement of the Levitical worship, vii. xii. and xxvi. and with great donations of gold and silver to Jerusalem. Here he was willingly received, but obliged to listen to the complaint, that the Israelites who had returned, had again defiled themselves by intermarriages with heathen women. To dissolve these marriages, and to send away the ungodly women, was the the first business of Ezra, as well as the last related in the book.

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.

Little as is related of Ezra, it is probable that he, as a priest, took a very particular interest in the regulation of the worship of God. Tradition ascribes not improbably more merit to Ezra than the modest man relates about himself. He is said to have collected the sacred writings of the Jews, and given them that separation from all other writings, in consequence of which they have been called the Canon, at least he laid the foundation of it. From him the synagogue, *i. e.* religious assemblies on the Sabbath, are said to have received, if not their origin, at least their fixed and proportioned form. He also appears to have constituted the Sanhedrim, a kind of council of state which assisted the high priest in the exercise of his ecclesiastical and civil power, and which was calculated to conduce much, especially at that time of confusion, to the restoration of the religious ecclesiastical polity of the people. But the external condition of the people was much exposed to assault. The most dangerous thing was, that

Jerusalem wanted walls, which were indispensable in those times of violence, and left its few inhabitants unprotected from every attack of the hostile neighbours. Nehemiah understood this. To remedy this defect, though he was born and educated in a strange land, and occupied an important office, yet he loved Jerusalem as the place of his fathers' sepulchres, ii.—iii., and he supplicated permission of the king to go thither in the twelfth year and restore it to order. He actually came thirteen years after the arrival of Ezra in his own name, as Zerubbabel had come before, viz. as *hathirsatha*, *i. e.* governor of the province sent by the king to Jerusalem. He had scarcely arrived, when he induced the inhabitants to build the walls. The enemies in the neighbourhood mocked at first, and afterwards tried to hinder the work by force, but Nehemiah caused one half of the people to stand under arms, and the remaining half to carry on the building, until after two months' labour the whole city was fortified round about. Then he rescued the poor from the pressure of rich usurers, chap. v. he appointed guardians over the city, chap. vii. he appointed also together with Ezra, that the feast of tabernacles should be solemnized, during which the latter read the law, chap. viii. Hereupon there was a general repentance of the people, and a renewed vowing to remain faithful to the covenant with God, chap. ix. x. After an absence of twelve years, Nehemiah returned for some days to Persia, but undertook afterwards a second journey to Jerusalem, where he, supported by Malachi, the last of the prophets, took care to maintain the observance of the Mosaic law, and in particular, their separation from the heathen, and the solemnization of the Sabbath. Who can misunderstand the design of God in these dispensations? The return was already foretold by Moses, Deut. xxx. 2—3, it was foretold by all the prophets who lived at that time,—longed for by so many thousand hearts; but till the time of Cyrus there was not the least appearance of the event taking place. Now it was manifested by a new example, that God fulfils his promises, now he showed that he had not cast off his people; and all who

before cherished faith in this, must now in astonishment have given scope to new hopes. That a people so few in number, so poor and inconsiderable, wholly dependent on the kings of Persia, should return, need not lead us astray. The times of earthly splendour were past, and a state of matters altogether new was now in the purpose of God. The number of Jews who remained in the country round about Babylon, averse to the toilsome undertaking of cultivating the waste country again, and building the temple, mightily could prepare the way for the kingdom of God among the heathen. The time had already drawn nigh, when the worshippers of the true God would be found not only in Jerusalem and the adjacent places, but everywhere. As the Jews themselves had been prepared for the appearing of the Messiah, and a more perfect religion in connection with Him, so they were designed now to prepare other nations also for Him. Even by their existence, through the written religious documents, their worship, their stern refusal to partake in any degree in the religion of their conquerors, there could and must have been awakened among the heathen, views, sentiments, and hopes, which to them were altogether foreign before, and not only in the wide regions of Asia did they sojourn; they soon wandered into Egypt, Greece, and Italy, so that about the time of Christ, societies of Jews were to be met with in almost all the more important cities, partly too with their own synagogues and teachers. For this reason the prevention from all intercourse with foreigners could no longer continue a part of the divine plan, necessary only for that time when the Jews were to guard against the influences of foreign countries; it must now fall away, since Israel having returned to the faith, was designed to work upon others as the teacher of the one true God. They had no more to do with worldly power, but to prepare for the coming of him whose kingdom was not of this world. The whole world at that time generally assumed a new form. During the period before this time many small independent nations had covered the earth. These gradually, either through

conquest or peaceful union, were incorporated into few, but on that account more powerful states; about the birth of Christ nearly all the nations known at that time were united under the one great Roman empire. Under these circumstances, it was natural and conformable to the divine purpose, that the small kingdom of the Jews, who till then had dwelt as it were in the heart of the civilized world, should lose its independence. Enough that a new temple was displayed over the ruins of the old; God had not forgotten his people, and caused that now adherence to the God of their fathers, in the heart of domestic and foreign Jews, was made a fit instrument of the divine plan, in which it was foreordained that salvation should come of the Jews, John iv. 22.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

This last historical book of the Old Testament does not stand in connexion with the foregoing, but departs from them, inasmuch as it refers less to the religion than to the outward circumstances of the people. The events recorded here, probably occurred before the journeys to Jerusalem of Ezra and Nehemiah; but they were written at a later period. This can cause no mistake, as it formed a history quite complete in itself, relative to the Jews that remained behind at Babylon.

The weak king Ahasuerus had repudiated his noble spouse Vashti, because he thought himself wronged by her, and instead of her had taken for his spouse Esther, a captive Jewess, without knowing her origin. At the same time Haman, his haughty and revengeful favourite, had resolved to root out the Jewish people, and for this purpose had been careful to obtain a command from the king sealed with his ring. Esther, however, being seasonably informed of the danger of her people, supplicated favour of the king, and prevailed with him to such a degree, that Haman fell into disgrace, and was hanged on the gallows which he had caused to be erected for Mordecai the Jew. Thus, his haughty spirit preceded his fall, and he fell himself into the pit which he had caused to be made for another. As in

Persia the royal commands were unalterable, and yet the destruction of the Jews had been already commanded, so they could be saved only by a new order, according to which self-defence was permitted them. This gave occasion to the great bloodshed in which the Jews avenged themselves on their enemies. So God, who is full of love, watched over his people even in their captivity, and saved them by a weak instrument, where human aid appeared impossible.

This event was so important to them, that in memory of it they appointed a peculiar feast called Purim. The book of Esther also appeared to them next in importance to the books of Moses. The author of the book we cannot know. It is one of the latest books of Scripture, nevertheless it was composed some centuries before the birth of Christ, because about this time the collection of the writings of the Old Testament was completed.

THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

SECOND DIVISION.

THE DOCTRINAL BOOKS.

By this appellation are designated in the collection of the Old Testament writings, the five next following books, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. The Jews called this portion of the sacred writings *Hagiographa*, (holy writings), and thereby signified that they were to be reckoned equally with the law and the prophets as holy writings. In the time of Jesus, this division was called the Psalms, as they formed the first book, Luke xxiv. 44. Meanwhile the Jews reckoned far more books in the class called *Hagiographa* than we do in the class of doctrinal books, namely, besides those mentioned, the books of Ruth, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the books of Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the two books of

Chronicles. It does not follow from this that all these books were written at a later period, but that they were taken later into the collection of holy writings, whilst before they were considered as single parts by themselves. The two earlier portions of the Old Testament, the law and the prophets, among which are also reckoned several historical books, were already concluded, and yet there were many writings besides these in circulation, which were considered holy. Accordingly, by the council, which sat at that time, a third part was prepared, and into it these twelve books were taken. But, in our German translation, Luther has assigned to most of these books a more suitable place, after the manner of the old Alexandrian edition. The book of Ruth he has put next to the book of Judges, as the history recorded therein took place in their time. The Lamentations of Jeremiah he connected with his prophecies. The book of Daniel he placed in the series of the prophetic books. The books of Chronicles are attached, very naturally, to the books of Kings, and they are followed by Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, which continue the history. Thus, there remain for us only the already named five books. Do we consider these in general, we find in them a rich fund of religious and moral sentiments, which are presented to us sometimes in devout hymns, sometimes in single sayings, and sometimes in continued discourses. Besides, they are different from the mode of representation peculiar to the prophets, so that it must strike us as wonderful at so early a period, and among a people distinguished more by religious than scientific culture, to find such various forms of expression. The same peculiarity also seems to belong to the plan of God, in the Holy Scriptures, that authors the most diverse in it, led by his Spirit, should express themselves in such diverse manners, kings, legislators, prophets, priests, and simple peasants, must give their contribution to the composition of a work which, though composed at different times, and by very dissimilar authors, is nevertheless pervaded by one Spirit.

Meanwhile the doctrinal books so far correspond with the prophetic writings, that out of them we learn the inward spiritual life, the life of religious feeling and faith, whilst the historical books present to us rather external life, and the external fortunes of it. Both must be united with each other. Our books are greatly illustrated by the reading of history. At the same time, history itself is spiritualized by the reading of our books.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

This excellent book, from which many thousand hearts derived consolation, was written peculiarly for the suffering. According to the most probable results of true inquiry, it is one of the oldest books extant, perhaps even older than the books of Moses. This follows not only from the phraseology of this book, but also from the absolute silence therein as to Jewish history, and the want of reference to the religious institutions of the Jews. It contains, indeed, allusions to the oldest history of the earth, but so that Job might have learned them rather from oral traditions than from written histories, which were not indeed extant at this early period, chap. xxi. 15, 16, and chap. xxxviii. In general, all in the book is patriarchal. Job himself sacrifices, and consequently belongs to an age when every father of a family was a priest, his chief riches, as did those of the patriarchs, consisted in flocks; his religious views, and those of his friends, are just the same as we find were entertained by Abraham and his family; and since they were not Israelites, we must therefore look for them in a time when the original faith in God, as the Creator and Lord of the world, had spread nevertheless beyond Abraham's family. In fine, the great age itself of Job points back to the patriarchal time. We must not, however, place the time of it too far back, as there are traces in it of the sciences, *ex. gr.* respecting mines, see xxviii. chap. which we cannot expect in the very earliest period.

We might not be far from the truth if we fix the period of its composition about the time when the Israelites were in Egypt. Accordingly, the book is an echo of the first times, and of the innocent wisdom of the fathers and patriarchs—a wisdom rich in its poverty.

The country where the events here mentioned are said to have taken place, is called the land of Uz, chap. i. 1. This Uz may have been either Damascus in Syria, founded by Uz, or a country in Edom or in Idumea, Gen. xxvi. 28. Lam. iv. 21. The latter is very probable, as the book contains many images which refer to countries situated near Edom, Egypt, and Arabia, but not to Syria, and speaks also of a third neighbouring nation, the Chaldeans. Edom was renowned at a very early period for its wisdom, Jer. xlix. 7. Obad. viii. 9, and the testimony of the Septuagint also speaks for Edom.

The author of the book is unknown to us. Some have supposed Moses was the author, whilst he sojourned in Midian; others have ascribed it to King Solomon; both opinions are equally unfounded. As we have reason to think, the narratives at the beginning and close of the book are true history, Job himself or some of his friends may have written it.

The short narration with which the book begins, chaps. i.—ii., places us in the proper position for finding the succeeding discourses of the wise man. He teaches us what had been decreed in heaven respecting Job, and was accomplished on earth, viz. that he, as a trial of his integrity, was overwhelmed with a most bitter calamity, and particularly after the loss of his children and his whole property, with a severe and apparently incurable disease, elephantiasis. He knew as little as his friends who visited him the cause of this misfortune. They indulged in various conjectures, but no one solved the difficulty. They spake of the most momentous questions in relation to mankind, concerning providence and fate, and God himself developed and loosed the knot.

Job begins the discourse, chap. iii., with a heart-

rending lamentation, in which he wishes he had never been born.

After this follow, in three divisions, the repeated attacks of his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, in which Job replies to each singly, chap. iv.—xiv; chap. xv.—xxi; chap. xxii.—xxvi. The three friends, who believe themselves called upon to defend the divine rectitude, make the objections first in a soft and covert manner, and then in a more open and bolder way, that he may indeed have exposed himself to this calamity because of his sins. Job contradicts all; he knows how to describe the divine wisdom and power much more beautifully than they: he says not a word that they could blame, but rather turns their objections in such a way as to support himself; he tears their weapons, as it were, from their hands, and forces them, at first, to shorten their discourses, and then to complete silence; and, first of all, the very person who had attacked him most mercilessly, namely, Zophar. But he also forgot himself; the heat of conflict stirred him up to object against the conduct of God, and to justify himself as righteous. Accordingly, with every new attack of his friends, the combat became hotter and more weighty;—truths already stated at an earlier period are repeated, and presented new applications, until, at last, Job stands forth as victor in the combat. After a silence, he now speaks alone, chap. xxvii.—xxxii.;—he comes to speak of all the positions which had hitherto been matter of dispute,—gives his own view of all,—retracts, in part, the harsh sayings which he had before used,—mentions his former prosperity, and bemoans most bitterly his present misery. He asserts, again, his complete innocence, and calls upon God to judge him. From chap. xxxii. to xxxvii. Elihu speaks, a young man who had hitherto listened to the controversy, but, from awe, had not interfered in it. It grieved him that Job wished to appear innocent in the sight of God, and that none of the others ventured to find fault with him on that account. Elihu

is not so unreasonable a gainsayer, nor so severe an accuser as the others, but he speaks the truth, and, before him, even Job now is struck dumb. What could he say against the objection, that his very dissatisfaction with God proved how necessary it must have been that he, through these sufferings, should be purified and brought to submit to the will of God? Elihu always comes back to this, viz., Divine providence careth for all;—sufferings are admonitions to those who properly use them, but their purposes are often dark; and man, who is of yesterday, should not presume to call his Maker to account. During his discourse, Elihu perceives a storm to arise, which he describes, and represents as a proof of the Divine greatness. He is silent; out of the thunder-cloud bursts forth the voice of God. It condemns Job's audacious declarations, and he is humbled;—it condemns, still more severely, the cold judgments of his friends; and as, at an earlier period, they assumed to be intercessors for Job, so they are now compelled to request Job's intercession for themselves. What God hath spoken, chapters xxxviii.—xli., is sublime; no reply is left to man;—he must stand speechless;—he must acknowledge that he is nothing. God did not inform Job why he had made him miserable. He does not justify himself, as we might, perhaps, have expected; for the creature requires not to know the principles according to which the Creator has proceeded. He cannot comprehend them. He cannot comprehend, at once, the phenomena of visible nature, how much less the secret dispensations of providence. On that account God directs him to visible nature, and particularly to several animals, among which Behemoth and Leviathan, (the Elephant and Crocodile,) are the largest. He proves, from them, his power and wisdom, and the wise man of earth stands speechless and full of repentance, and sinks down in the dust. God forgives him, and compensates him for his losses. and makes him more happy than he had been before. From

the foregoing remarks we gather the plan and design of the whole book. It is an answer to the question which has already employed so many minds, whence come the woes of this present life?

Two views have prevailed respecting it, both alike partial and false. The one put forth by the three friends of Job, and the common opinion of the Israelitish people, is the revolting idea, that where there is misery there must be also great sins manifest or concealed, and in the latter case only the more culpable. But the other, which has been defended by Job, implies erroneous views of divine providence. The miserable, overwhelmed by a multiplicity of unhappy events, all and each one of which is sufficient to fill his soul with grief, finding accusers when he had calculated on comforters, is conscious of his freedom from the objections made against him, and complains, in his bitter condition, even of the administration of the world. "The destinies of men," so cries the unbelieving man in his dejection, "do not correspond to their desert;" neither the good man, for he is often unprosperous, nor in the case of the bad man, for he often continues in a happy condition all his days. The life of man is an inexplicable riddle. The two perverted views which form, in substance, the discourses of Job and his friends, chap. iii.—xxv. are now about to find their rectification in a higher view. It is prepared by this, that Job himself moderates the roughness of his lamentation, chap. xxvi.—xxx. introduced by Elihu, chap. xxxii.—xxxvii. and, in the end, definitely expressed by God, chap. xxxviii.—xli. It consists in the following: to justify the divine rectitude is not the province of weak mortals, but it is necessarily connected with the perfection of the divine essence itself, as is manifested in his revelation and in creation. Man's weak understanding, which does not comprehend the mysteries of creation, should not venture to see through the plan of God, or wish to censure it. Does suffering come upon him, he submits, and

leaves it to the disposal of him who has laid it upon him. Herewith is the question answered, not for the understanding, which is rather reminded of its limits, but for faith.

The worth of this book consists, in addition to the sublime subject of which it treats in so interesting a way, in the excellent manner in which the opposite portions are developed, and set over against the solution; in the definite characteristics by which each of the opposite parties maintains his consistency. The one more gentle, the other more austere; above all, in the variety of images and views. The author turns the view of his readers upon the whole of nature, and leads them to find in it proofs of the greatness of the Creator and the weakness of man. He dedicates nature as a temple of the Lord, in which the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament proclaims his handy work.

The spirited Herder, who was much conversant with this book, has spoken of it as follows: I come to the oldest and most sublime didactic poem of antiquity, the book of Job. But what shall I say of it? What shall I say of a book whose view appears to me sometimes as the starry heavens, sometimes as the joyous wild tumult of the whole creation, sometimes as the deepest complaint of humanity, from the heap of ashes of a prince to the rocks of the Arabian wilderness. My voice ceases to praise one single description of God in nature, or in his providence—one single feeling of grief, such as this book gives it forth, full of the inmost sound of the heart, not to mention the last picture, in which is drawn together all the great and the wonderful in creation, to sustain the majestic throne of God—to praise, I say, one single feature of these only as I feel it. Here let my silence be praise."

THE PSALMS.

The Psalms differ from the doctrinal books of Job and

Ecclesiastes, by this : that each single Psalm is complete in itself ; but from the Proverbs of Solomon, by their greater copiousness ; at the same time. they differ from both these, in this, that their purpose is less to enlighten than to warm the heart. They contain, not in a doctrinal line, but in the language of the inmost feeling, heart-stirring views of the divine perfections, of the happiness of the godly, and the misfortunes of the ungodly, of human nature, of single virtues and divine benefits ; and, in general, of every thing that awakens religious feeling ; and that can only appertain to the inward communion of the soul with God, remembrance, admiration, love, trust, resignation, desire, hope, joy, and what ways the soul can pour itself forth in prayer, in soliloquies, in praise, in lamentation, all these are here comprehended. God is throughout the aim to which the longing, loving, hoping, sorrowful, moaning, soul looks, sometimes it mentions his doings in time past ; sometimes it flees to him in the present ; sometimes it looks in hope to the distant future. Moreover, the Psalms are not mere written, and wisely devised, contemplations, but, what must give them a particular value, they contain the real feelings of their authors, as they gave expression to them in times of sorrow and of joy. Thus, then, we find in them a collection of models for the intercourse of the soul with God. Who that reads these Psalms does not know how he should pray, how he should occupy his soul in silent moments with God ; and feel himself impressed by them, and joyfully respond to their sentiments ? For although they were made, in the first instance, only on particular occasions, and by individuals for themselves, yet they serve, not only as patterns for similar occasions, but, in a great number of them, a pious heart always finds some which are peculiarly suited to their own frame. For that reason, they have been sung thousands of years ago, by pious Israelites and priests ; for that reason have so many good men cherished a particular fondness for the psalm book ;

and recognised in it the true language of the heart. In this way Luther, in particular, felt; he called it the Bible in miniature, and recommended it in the following words, worthy of the deepest consideration:—

“Where do we find finer words of joy than we have in the Psalms of praise and thanksgiving? There thou seest all that is holy in the heart, as in a beautiful, delightful garden; yea, as in heaven, as fine tender blossoms in it proceed from the various beautiful joyful expressions of gratitude to God for his goodness. Again, where dost thou find more profound, mournful, woeful words of sorrow, than the Psalms of lamentation have? there thou seest again all that is holy in heart, as in death: yea, as in the grave. How sullen and dark is it from the many affecting views of God’s wrath? also, even when they speak of hope and fear, they make use of such words as no painter could pourtray them, and no orator could express. And what is best of all; they employ such words to God, and with God, as cause a twofold earnestness and life in the words. For when a man speaks to men on such matters, it does not go forth strong from the heart, neither doth it burn, live, and penetrate so much. It has come to pass, that the Psalter is the little book of all holy individuals; and each one, in whatever situation he is, finds psalms and words which agree with his condition, and suit it as well as if they had been composed solely on his account, so that he could not compose, or find, or even wish for a better; and this thing serves also this useful end, that when such words occur to a person, and suit his situation, they do it in such a way that he is sure he is in fellowship with the holy, and has joined all the holy as they join him, because they all sing a little song with him.”

The Psalms teach you to preserve equanimity in joy, fear, hope, and in sorrow; and say what all the holy have felt and said. To sum up all, dost thou desire to see a picture of the holy Christian Church,

with living colours, and form grouped in a little figure ? take the Psalter before thee, and thou hast a fine, clear, bright mirror, which will show thee what Christianity is ; yea, thou wilt find thyself also in it, and the right knowledge of thyself, and of the duties thou owest to God and his creatures."

In the same manner Arndt has expressed himself, when he says, " What the heart is in man, that the book of Psalms is in the Bible ; for in no other book of Scripture is the heart of believers, with all its inmost affections and emotions, in love, and in sorrow, in good and in evil days, so pourtrayed and described, as in the Psalter."

The greatest number of the Psalms came forth in the time of David ; and were composed by himself and his friends ; only a few, *ex. gr.* the 90th and perhaps the 119th, are earlier. Many are considerably later. Their authors, whom we do not know, followed, incited by the example which that devout king had given. As the divine plan was developed only in a gradual manner, so also we find a gradual development in the religious sentiment of the pious under the Old Testament dispensation. In the time of the partriarchs they were simple and childlike ; at the time of Moses and the judges they were martial, vigorous, and greatly elevated, but in the Psalms the sound of the warlike trumpet ceases, and the softer harp, upon which David was a master, gave milder, more mournful, not less moving tones. David's reign presents, however, amidst all his great actions, times of repose, in which holy singers sang in undisturbed tranquillity the praises of God and his promises.

The Psalms are divided, perhaps, after the example of the five books of Moses, into five books ; each of which concludes with Amen, or Amen, hallelujah.

The first portion was, indeed, collected in the time of David ; the other parts were arranged gradually ; and the last of them, though containing several Psalms of David, appear, on account of others that were composed during the Babylonish captivity, to have been

first collected after that event. A more minute consideration shows that the arrangement of particular Psalms, next to those with which they stand in connexion, was not made from caprice; but out of single smaller collections, either according to their contents, (Psalms of Praise and Psalms of Degrees,) or according to their authors, (*ex. gr.* David and Asaph.)

The first book contains Psalms i.—xli. Psalm i. is the preface; Psalm ii. considered as a Psalm concerning the Messiah, is the crown of the whole book. Psalm iii.—xli. Here follow Psalms by David, and which have a particular reference to his fortunes.

The second book comprises Psalms from the xlii. to the lxxii. Psalms xlii.—xlix. are hymns of the children of Korah, (only the xliii. has no superscription,) of various contents, yet mostly for the whole people.

Psalm L. is a doctrinal Psalm of Asaph. Psalm li.—lxv. are by David, in reference to particular occurrences in his life. Psalms lxvi.—lxxii. are, again, Psalms for the people; of these lxvi, lxvii, lxxi, are by unknown authors; lxviii.—lxx. by David; the lxxii. was by Solomon.

The third book contains the Psalms from the lxxiii. to the lxxxix. of these, from the lxxiii. to the lxxxiii. are by Asaph; from the lxxxiv. to lxxxviii. by the sons of Korah; with the exception of the lxxxvi. which owes its origin to David. In Psalm lxxxviii. the author's name, Heman, is particularly noted; Psalm lxxxix. is by Ethan, probably too one of the Korahites; this book contains, for the most part, Psalms for the people.

The fourth book consists only of sixteen Psalms, namely, from the xc. to the cvi.; Psalm xc. is the song of Moses in the wilderness, when the disobedient Israelites died there; Psalms xci.—cvi. are hymns for the temple and the feasts, by unknown authors; with the exception of ci. and ciii. which are by David.

The fifth book proceeds from the cvii. to the cl. Psalm cvii. is a Psalm of thanksgiving; from cviii.—cx. are by David; from cxi.—cxviii. are Psalms of thanksgiving and praise, and by authors unknown; Psalm cxix. is as if a book of proverbs. From cxx.—cxxx. follow the so called Psalms in the higher chorus or degrees, which probably were sung by the Israelites when they travelled out of the provinces, to the feasts at Jerusalem. They are by unknown authors, with exception of the cxxvii. which is by Solomon. After this follow from cxxxv.—cxxxvii. thanksgiving Psalms by unknown authors. Then from Psalm cxxxviii.—cxlv. are hymns by David; and to the end, from Psalm cxlvi.—cl. they are thanksgiving Psalms.

Thus it appears that about the half of the Psalms is by David. They have also something peculiar, whereby an expert reader can easily understand them; namely, they are very natural, tender, artless, lively. There is seen in them, a tender heart, a deeply feeling soul, which already suffered much, but which obtained courage in looking up to God. His sentiments are tender and fine, every where we behold in them a much tried man, one in whom the divine goodness had been glorified. As the Psalms of David are explained by his history, so do they also reflect light on it. We see in them a heart full of admiration of the divine greatness; full of gratitude for his guidance; and full of trust under the dangers of the time; full of susceptibility for the beautifulness of nature; full of repentance on account of the pollution through sin; the whole soul of David expressed itself peculiarly in the penitential Psalms; his ardent wish for purity, yea after the transformation of his heart. But in the night of his painful feeling he looked the more ardently to the mountain whence his help came; and directed the like-minded reader to the Sun of the gospel, which proclaimed to him the atonement. What pleases us, perhaps least of all, in the Psalms of David is; that they contain violent complaints and imprecations against his enemies; the apology for him

would not be sufficient, which says, that from the many calamities which oppressed him from his youth, a certain bitterness might have flowed from the heart of David. The right view consists rather in this:—

That David considered himself the representative of the kingdom of God, and his enemies as the haters of God, Psalm cxxxix. 21. Far removed from irritated self-love, from wrath on account of personal injuries; he sees in his adversaries, malicious opposers, who in him, fought against all the godly, and God himself, with violence and falsehood. Then his indignation was awakened, and his holy zeal led him to express sharp words.

Besides, how greatly David himself valued his Psalms, is seen from this, that, when dying, he derived more comfort from them than all his great deeds. This so comforted the great king in death; that he could say, the spirit of the Lord had spoken through me, and his word had been manifested through my tongue. He hoped to live always in the hearts and mouths of his people, more by his Psalms than by his conquests and victories. This hope has been more than fulfilled; since now, after thousands of years, pious minds are quickened by them. The Psalms of Asaph are mostly didactic poems, and popular songs; both are distinguished in their kind. He was the contemporary of David, and presided over the temple music. The Korachites were appointed by David, as singers in the divine service. Their Psalms, though composed on different occasions, agree in short, ardent, and picturesque conceptions, in rough movement. The xc. Psalm is a precious bequest of Moses. From Solomon we have only two lovely Psalms. All the other Psalms have come from unknown authors, and some at a later period; but for this reason, they are not the less excellent. Similar times of difficulty and joy, gave occasion to inspired Israelites, to strike the harp which David had tuned, and to call forth equally soft tones. The requirements of the temple also, the divine service, the feasts, and fortunes of the

people, afforded sufficient occasion for such compositions. It must make the Psalms dearer to us, that we may consider them as lively witnesses of the state of religion at an early period of the divine revelations, but yet they become more estimable with us, by the references to Christ which they contain. These even the Jews found in them, and explained many portions of the Messiah they so ardently desired. Jesus himself referred them to these, and hereby put his enemies to silence, Matthew xxii. 44. With not less clearness, the apostles have shewn that, in many Psalms, particularly the xvi. cx. the greatness could not manifestly have been realised in David, and must therefore have had a higher reference, Acts ii. 25 and 34. Besides, they delighted to bring forward portions out of the Psalms, and to compare the lot of Christ with that of his ancestors. The still later families could not look back upon David, without at the same time uniting the contemplation with his yet greater descendant.

THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

How rich is the holy scripture in manifold kinds of instruction and edification? How rich in manifold ways of information, even in these sayings of the wise Solomon! There is religion and the foundation of morals. They are presented in short delightful sayings, which Solomon himself compared to apples of gold set in pictures of silver.

The proverbs contain not so much commands and legal ordinances, as wise counsels and encouragements, warnings, rules of prudence, axioms for moral conduct, for civil government; and, especially, for family prosperity and education. In them is united a higher wisdom with true prudence; and, frequently it is repeated, that the virtuous only act as a wise man, but the ungodly as a fool. Moral precepts can, agreeably to their nature, be represented only in general terms. Such as, love *God*, be

just, &c.; because their exercise in each particular person is found a gain under peculiar and different circumstances, all of which the law cannot announce singly, since they are too numerous. Besides, the application of the law must be left to the moral feelings,—to the sound judgment and conscience of each individual. How salutary when the Holy Scriptures have given us, as it were, in one collection of examples, a number of such single cases, by which our moral feeling itself is refined, sharpened, and guided more surely in its judgments. For that reason Luther judged, that every man who would be considered pious should have this book for a daily companion, should read often in it, and look at his life in it. With the excellence of the contents, there is united, in these proverbs, the concise, powerful, and elegant mode of expression which can easily be treasured up in the memory. The Orientals are very fond of such proverbs, and other people of the East have similar collections. Even in the scriptures we find such others, namely, the *cxix.* Psalm. With the origin of these proverbs, it is much the same as with that of many of the Psalms. Their author has not invented them after long and painful study, and as if with the pen in his hand; but he spake them as originating in the real occurrences of his life, and out of the fulness of his divine wisdom. On reading these memorials of Solomon's wisdom, we should not read many of them at once; but consider each one according to its full and true sense, otherwise the attention will be dissipated, and much will be forgotten amid the many.

According to the inscription, Solomon is the author of most of these proverbs, a man who, because of his wisdom, was renowned far and wide; and, according to 1 Kings iv. 32, he uttered three thousand proverbs, and composed one thousand and five songs, of which the greater number are lost. This book, like the Psalms, was compiled from different collections of such sayings. From chap. i.—ix. we have

a series of connected representations and instructions. With chap. x., which has a new superscription, begin the particular proverbs, each of which is comprised in a verse. From chap. xxii. 17, there follow, after a new introduction, exhortations, which have the same connexion. In part first, from chap. xxv.—xxix., is contained a collection of Solomon's proverbs, which, according to the superscription, were first arranged in the time of Hezekiah. The xxx. chap. consists of proverbs by the wise Agur; and the xxxi. consists of the admonitions of a pious queen to her son; probably the mother of Solomon, who is here called Lemuel. This book, justly, held a higher place in the estimation of the Israelites; and that their esteem for it had not diminished in the time of our Saviour, is obvious from the many references thereto which are made in the New Testament. To us, also, this book must appear holy and venerable, which, notwithstanding its antiquity, being twenty-eight hundred years old, contains instructions which the wisest of our times could not surpass.

ECCLESIASTES, OR THE PREACHER.

This book, which has been ascribed to Solomon, contains, in part, the wisdom which has made Solomon so renowned; and, in part, that hypochondriac view of the world which might be expected from him immediately after his deep fall. Beginning with the gravest truth, that all is vanity, he repeats the same frequently, with new applications and proofs:—Men are born and die again;—The families of the earth change;—The sun rises and sets;—The wind blows sometimes from the south, sometimes from the north;—Man speaks and is not weary; he sees and hears without being satisfied, so it was always, and so it will ever be;—There is nothing new under the sun;—Man cannot penetrate secret causes and intentions; he cannot make straight the crooked; his wisdom makes him

many sorrows. This Solomon proved by his own example ; he had, as he informs us, given himself up to joy, and he found it vain ;—he had devoted himself to wisdom and to every useful pursuit, and experienced, as the fruit of these, vanity and misery. Thus, this man of much experience showed he had learned human life and its employments, through a long life, and the school of happiness and misery. He communicates the rich treasure, the fruits of experience. He had gone through all, as he had observed, and the conclusion to which he came was that all is vanity. This is, as it were, the thread which runs through the whole book, and binds all together. But, besides, we meet with many interruptions and repetitions ; and, in part (chap. iv. 17, and chap. v.) proverbs after the manner of the preceding book. Many times, to be sure, Solomon felt, amid his bitter lamentations, the peace and enjoyment of the good, which presents itself to men in every situation, and all the imperfection and misery of this earthly life. But he comes back to his former dark views : and, hence, he cannot rest perfectly satisfied. His complaint of the vanity of the world, and of all therein that men value, becomes continually louder and harsher. In the course of several discourses, we meet with such as resemble those of Job, which pain extorted from him, when he was suffering. Here as there, the lamentation appears to amount to total despair ; even to the renouncing of divine aid and providence. A less experienced reader of the Bible will not understand how to explain these positions. It has even been actually supposed that, in this book, there is a dialogue between two persons, the one of which makes the objections, which the other answers, somewhat after the manner of the book of Job. Yet a comparison with the book of Job gives the right explanation. As there, the end crowns the work,—contradicts the wisdom of the earthly wise,—calms the desponding lamentations of Job ; so the same takes place here. Solo-

mon represented all which passed through his mind openly before the view ; free from reservation. He thought aloud,—he let others, too, hear the different voices which resounded within him ; but he conducted them and himself to the most satisfactory termination. For, in the conclusion of his book, he has announced, as the sum of his doctrine.—as the only thing which is not vain ;—The law ;—Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all men ; for God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil. Here, viewed from this boundary, there appears, at once, religious depth and connection in a work which, on first view, seems to be wanting in connexion. The book, besides the preface and postscript, consists of three principal parts, in which the development of the whole is gradually set before the reader.

The title and preface, chap. i. 1—11.

1. Principal division leading from the vanity of all earthly things apart from God to the only wisdom. The fear of God.

Proceeding from the former in four different positions, and leading to the right conclusion, i. 12 ; vii. 29.

1) The four ascending positions, i. 12—18 ; iii. 1—15 ; iii. 16 ; v. 19 ; vi. 1 ; vii. 23.

2) The comprehensive conclusion in the double, “I have found,” vii. 23—29.

Second principal division, or repetition of the former, but clearer, more definite, expounded in many proverbs. Uttered rather out of the rest of him who has already attained it, after his painful search had been related in the first part, viii.—xi.

1) An uninterrupted connection, viii. 1 ; x. 10.

2) A more particular appendix, more striking proverbs, x. 11 ; xi. 6.

3) The comprehensive conclusion, xi. 7—10.

Third principal division ; full light upon all that preceded, xii. 1—7.

Subscription and postscript, xii. 8—14.

Who does not now perceive the value of this book ; in it a truly wise man speaks, who has experienced all, and must recognize all, as vain without faith in God and obedience to him. This concluding observation casts light upon the whole, even the parts which at first view appear too strong find in connection satisfactory explanation. In all the pictures of the confusions upon earth there is no denial of Providence. Amid all the recommendations of a joyful use of the bounties of Providence, no limitation is denied which religion demands. In fine, in all the comparisons of men and beasts in death, the immortality of the soul is never denied.

Herder hath observed of Ecclesiastes, “ No ancient book with which I am acquainted describes in a richer, more concise, and judicious manner, than this, the sum of human life, its changes and nothingness in affairs, projects, speculations, along with that which alone, in it is true, enduring, advancing, growing, praising. A king’s swork ! How many men of business and experience, at least in their old age, have found extraordinary enjoyment in it, and have reduced to it at last as it were the wisdom of their life, the few words in it are the results of larger books ; of the course of human life and periods of the world, and are indeed what the end of the book proclaimed, lovely words of righteousness and truth, prickles and nails in the soul.”

Hence it follows how this book should be read and considered, namely, in a directly opposite way to that in which the Proverbs should be read. While in reading the latter, we must consider each particular proverb, so it is most important to read this book in its connection, particularly, in the connection of the conclusion with all that preceded it. Even when all the wisdom, and power, and splendour of the world appears as only vanity, faith in God and obedience towards him, may elevate him again who has felt it in its nothingness.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

The difficulties which the preceding book presents to the interpreter, appear as trivial when compared with the manifold and important ones connected with this lovely little poem, which is all that has come down to us of the thousand and five which Solomon composed. Sometimes we stumble at historical circumstances which are now unknown to us ; sometimes we do not know who the person is who speaks ; sometimes, and that most frequently, we miss the connection. But, at the same time, what we can easily understand, must render it important and precious in our view.

Solomon is the author, and indeed the poem suits only that period. For since the loss of paradise, this lovely blossom of peace could no where have grown so well as in Solomon's valley of repose and love. The times of the patriarchs full of toilsome wanderings. The oppressive slavery in Egypt. The great revelations of God under Moses. The alternations under the judges of wars and idolatry. The heroic deeds under David inspired to wholly different compositions. Only in the times of Solomon, celebrated by the latter Jews as the golden period of the nation, could so tender a plant have grown. Under the sunshine of a long peace.

If we abide by the clear literal meaning, it contains descriptions of bridal and conjugal love ; and that too of an innocent kind, of rural paradisaical love, belonging to a heart still undivided ; and not yet corrupted by lust. And the descriptions and pictures given, are such as they should be in this case ; simple, natural, sweet, fine, full of charming situations, sometimes joyous in possession, sometimes ardent in desire. Connection and order are not apparent, and the unity of the book only consists in this, that the love described, is uniformly distinguished by purity and innocence.

First of all we stand upon this point of view. Ask

ourselves if this poem, as already described, be worthy of its place amid the books of holy writ? But why should not the holiest relation which can subsist among human beings, marriage, which had already been consecrated in paradise, find also a peculiar book in the Bible appropriated to it? Was it unworthy of Solomon, in a particular book, to paint that pure love which he has celebrated here and there in his proverbs?

But with these general observations we must be satisfied. For the illustration of particulars presents so many difficulties, that the most different views have been entertained. Sometimes Solomon, and the person known in the history of David by the name of Abisez of Sunam, here called Sulameth, are said to be the attached persons: Again, some believe they have found that the Sulamite was loved by Solomon; but that he at the same time inclined to another, one probably to whom he had been espoused at an earlier period. Sometimes a total want of connection is found, and it is believed to have been composed out of a number of various lesser poems, in all of which love is described. Each of these views has great difficulties. Even in the earliest period, and in particular among the Jews; the poem was usually understood to have a spiritual and mystical meaning.

They compared it to the holy of holies in the temple. Whilst they understood the other books of the Old Testament to resemble only the holy place, and it was forbidden any young person to read it before his thirtieth year. Certainly it is usual throughout the Old and New Testaments, to compare the relation between God and the church to that of marriage, Isa. lxiv. 4; L. 1; liv. 5. Ezek. xvi. 23. Hosea ii. 19. Eph. v. 25. It is nearly certain, that it was taken into the canon on this ground, by the persons who first arranged it, as its very name, High Song, literally, Song of Songs, points to a peculiarly high object. Many difficulties of the literal interpretation disappear immediately in this way. Some descriptions suit

much less a bride than a people, v. 1, I am black but comely. iii. 6, Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke. This most appropriately refers to the condition of the Israelitish people, who passed through the wilderness under the direction of the pillar of cloud, vi. 3. Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem. Terrible as an army with banners. Would an objector say against the spiritual exposition, it is fit to abide by the letter, and by no means to seek a more profound meaning? It may be replied, that this maxim is right in general; but is not at all applicable to the places where the writer himself intends to represent under the vail of an outward covering a spiritual meaning. Owing to all these grounds, it is almost certain that the spiritual is the right exposition of this book. But this view also has great difficulties to contend with, and even on this principle the most different expositions have been attempted. Sometimes the Song is said to pourtray the love of Solomon for wisdom, which is described under the name Sulameth. Again it has been considered the work of a friend of Solomon, whereby he would bring him back again to wisdom, from which Solomon was on the point of departing, having been enticed by sensuality. Again, it has been said to contain a history of the Old and prophetically of the New Testament. Also sometimes the relation of God to the Jews, or prophetically of Christ to his church, or to the individual soul. In fine, it has been said to be composed in the time of king Hezekiah, with the design of exciting his compassion towards the Israelites that still remained from the oppressed kingdom of the ten tribes.

This is not the proper place to examine these collective opinions, and to keep out the correct one among them. Rather would we here quote briefly the decision of one of the best and most influential inquirers. Nearly all the reasons, says he, which go to prove the spiritual acceptation of this Song, ne-

cessarily assume the relation of Jehovah to the Jewish people, as the object of representation.

The question, whether the relation of Christ and his church is pourtrayed in the Song of Solomon, must be negatived, if it be said to have such a sense as that the Song does not at all refer to the times of the Old Testament,—if it be entirely torn out of its historical connection, and if it be asserted that it prophetically describes only the love of Christ to the Church of the New Testament. We must rather, on the contrary, answer it in the affirmative, in so far as Jehovah, whose love to the people of the old dispensation was described, is no other than Christ, who at all times manifested to men the glory of God. We must also assert it, in so far as the church of the old, and the church of the new dispensation stand, on the whole, in the same relation to Christ. As there are repeated in both sin and grace, the fall and regeneration, which are the representations of this Song.

THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THIRD DIVISION.

THE PROPHETICAL WRITINGS.

THE prophets have already made themselves known to us as important men in the development of the divine plan, and in the religious and civil composition of the old dispensation, they will appear to us still more memorable, in consequence of the following writings, which now appear in the series of canonical books. Different in particulars, in contents, in manner, in relation, times and persons, they are essentially the same in the spirit whereby they are all pervaded. The Spirit of God speaks out of them, and

thus forms, amid all the peculiarities of individual writers, that notable agreement.

In the prophet, the pious Israelite beheld, and we think that we, too, behold a man by whom God spake and acted, on which account he has been called the mouth of God, Ex. iv. 16, and both are represented to each other in the relation of commander and interpreter, of sender and sent, Ex. vii. 1. Deut. xviii. 15. Jer. i. 9. In all this was implied, that the prophets were regarded as the peculiar confidants of God, Gen. xx. 7. They were called, for that reason, men of God, servants of God, and seers, Isa. xxx. 10. 2 Kings xvii. 13. 1 Chron. xxx. 29. Many of these, though not all, *ex. gr.* Moses, Aaron, Elias, Elisha, were endowed with the power of working miracles, Some, namely Moses, Ex. xxxiii. 9; Elias, 1 Kings xix. 8; Isaiah, Isa. vi. 1—4; Ezekiel, Ezek. i. 1; Daniel vii. 9, were consecrated to their office by a peculiar manifestation of God. In our view, the less important parts of their office consisted in preserving the civil constitution, and composing the history of their times; they were under the necessity to announce to the king, even when surrounded by a host of flatterers, the truth, though unwelcome to him.

The peculiar frame of the Jewish state, according to which the civil constitution rested on a religious ground, must have given to these servants of religion a peculiar influence on the civil government. Sometimes these men had to give counsel in civil as well as religious matters, in opposition to the king, sometimes against the people, and sometimes the priests, to direct to the law of Moses and to proclaim the will of God.

With the composition of the history of their own times only the fewest of them were, indeed, occupied. The times of David were described by Samuel, Nathan, and Gad, 1 Chron. xxx. 29. The reign of Rehoboam, by Shemaiah and Iddo, 2 Chron. xii. 15; also Jehu, 2 Chron. xx. 34; Isaiah, 2 Chron. xxvi. 22, were writers of history; and what we have still

in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, is probably a short statement from the historical books of these men. Even a glance teacheth us that this history was composed by men who, so far from flattering kings, allowed themselves to be corrupted by nothing external, and judged according to firm fundamental principles.

Partly the religious instructions, and partly the predictions of the prophets, are of importance to us.

They, like Abraham, Gen. xii. 8, teachers of the people, advanced those truths, and awaked those sentiments which corresponded to the covenant of God with their forefathers, and with himself.

The choosing of Israel by God, their former guidance, the ancient promises in case of obedience, the threatenings against disobedience, the existing condition of the people, with their peculiar advantages and errors, all these formed the basis on which the instructions of the prophets were founded. In outward providences, wars, public calamities, conquests, they recognized the power of God continually exerted to make the people attentive to the loud voice of God in the world's history. Their peculiar province was to provoke to a spiritual worship of God a people attached to a sensual ceremonial mode of divine worship. To show the insufficiency of outward observances, and to denounce unsparingly, with all their esteem for the Mosaic law, the hypocrisy with which it was frequently accompanied. Is. i. 9—20; lvi. 3—10. Amos v. 22. Micah vi. 6, 8. In the calling of the prophets are best known their predictions, so that by a prophet is usually understood nothing more than a man who predicts future things. A great part of these prophecies have reference to the destiny of heathen nations, and of the Jewish nation itself, in which are announced sometimes blessings, sometimes curses. Indeed, it was the most difficult task of the prophets to predict to the people they tenderly loved misfortune, and thereby to expose themselves to their hatred. Because

of this history hath informed us that though the persons of these men were holy, and, by law, sacred, yet the greater number of them were visited with a deplorable death, Math. xxiii. 37. On this account many at first declined to undertake the difficult office, as Moses, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Often, as it were, against their will, and to their own foreseen shame, but, impelled by an irresistible impulse, proceeding from divine power, they announce the misery of their nation; and, full of sympathy, first feel the burden of their office, Jer. vi. 11; xx. 9.

To assume that they had only consulted their own skill and knowledge of state affairs, and, consequently, as not more knowing than other clever men, would be the most infidel and groundless supposition,—most contradictory to the spirit of the prophets. Where is the wise man, in our own day, who can predict political occurrences, and determine the very year when their fulfilment is to take place. In a wholly different manner the prophets explained themselves. They considered the word of God, which they announced, as a fire,—as a hammer which breaks in pieces the rocks, Jer. xxiii. 29,—as a word which will not return void, Isa. lv. 11, so sure were their own expressions to themselves, that they saw, as it were, the misery they foretold, and smote the land by the rod of their mouth, and freed it again by their mighty word. Isa. xi. 4. Jer. i. 10. Isa. v. 14.

The manifold prophetic announcements of the Messianic time affects us much more nearly. Therein the thinking Israelites were reminded that their religion was only a preparatory institution, and there was awakened, in their minds, a desire for the more perfect revelation of God. Is Christ the centre of history, as he really is? So the hearts of the pious, under the Old Testament dispensation, must have been directed, with longing desire, towards him, as believers, under the gospel dispensation, look backwards to him with gratitude. Also the Old Testament, out of which the gospel emanated, should

have in it something evangelical; and the Christian ventures to rejoice that he finds here also references to his Saviour.

If we consider the prophecies more strictly, so we find the period of the Messiah represented in them only in a general manner; sometimes as a happy era,—a time of great abundance and of the richest blessings of Israel. This is done here and there under many sensuous and unsubstantial images, of healthfulness, long life, fertility of the land, victory over enemies, uninterrupted peace, splendour of the Temple and of Mount Zion; but sometimes under substantial and spiritual representations of a purer divine worship, of a wider diffusion of it over the whole earth, which latter may be perceived as a chief topic from the whole connexion, in part from their opposition to the current conceptions of the age; in part, also, from their frequent return. But sometimes, also, the person of the Messiah himself was the subject of discourse, as the great king arising from the family of David, who was to introduce this happy time, to glorify his greatness by righteousness, his power by mildness and goodness, his kingly dominion by the establishment of the pure worship of God. Sometimes this Messiah is depicted in his lowliness as a branch springing out of a root, as exposed to the most painful sufferings, and to death itself, as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. These features appear contradictory; but, in the life of Jesus, they were united, and he himself found them fulfilled in it.

The efficacy of the spirit of God on the souls of the prophets is evident here, 1 Peter i. 11; how could we otherwise explain these predictions themselves, and the circumstances that not only one, but many prophets, quite different as to times, places, and circumstances; appeared in successive order, and agreed strictly with each other. We must consider them as a light in a dark place, until the day has dawned, 2 Peter i. 19, as the true witnesses whose veracity Jesus him-

self has confirmed, John v. 29. Mathew xxvi. 54. Luke xxiv. 27, and 32 and 45.

In this important calling, there was conceded to the prophets an important privilege in the Mosaic constitution. A true prophet must be hearkened to Deut. xviii. 15, and stood under the peculiar guardianship of God. So long as righteousness was in the land they could not be prevailed on to do any thing. They submitted to be immured in prison until the event confirmed the truth of their predictions, 1 Kings xxii. 27. Jer. xxvi. 16, 24. This wise institution was not, indeed, always respected by tyrants. Moses doomed a false prophet to death, Deut. xviii. 20; xiii. 11, a harsh, but, at the same time, a righteous punishment, when we think of the injury which must happen, by their means, to the belief in the one living and true God, and the efficiency of the true prophets. There are two marks by which to know a false prophet. Namely, when one prophesied in the name of another god, or when his prophecy was not fulfilled. But this law was not ever carried into effect, Jer. 5—31, because the false prophets were, for the most part, flatterers of the kings, and associates of the priests.

Indeed, there were prophets even at an earlier period, nevertheless the bloom of this state began chiefly with the reign of David, and continued from that period downward to the time of Nehemiah. It appears that Samuel, in particular, had done much for it, at least he was renowned as the overseer of the prophets, 1 Samuel xix. 20; x. 5, and we cannot expect less than this from him when his zeal is taken into account. According to the passages just quoted, the prophets were for the most part employed at that time with religious music, which made a deep impression on the hearers, and in particular upon Saul. They were divided among cities, namely, Gibeah, Ramah, Bethel, and Gilgal, and instructed the people on particular days, 2 Kings iv. 23. Their number must have been very considerable, as they

are often mentioned in history as amounting to hundreds, 2 Kings iv. 43. Nothing was so much calculated to vex the true prophets as the numbers of hypocrites and liars, who pressed into this situation. At one time, Micah alone had to defend the truth against four hundred such persons, 1 Kings xxii. 6; Jeremiah complains bitterly of those men who were not sent of God, Jer. xxiii. 9; xxxiv. 14, and who, at one time, effected his imprisonment, others also agreed with him in this, Isa. xxviii. 7. Ezek. xiii. 9. Whilst the honest defenders of the truth endured hatred and persecution, the false prophets, on the contrary, enjoyed the favour of kings, whose evil deeds they sanctioned, and the favour of the people, whose lusts they flattered. Whilst the men of God proclaimed chastisements, they preached peace, where yet there was no peace, and strengthened those in their false security, whom they should have warned. All the instruction of the schools, to which some appear to have devoted themselves, in order to qualify for this office, was not sufficient to form men like Isaiah, only the spirit of God was his instructor. Amos did not at once give himself out as a prophet, as he had not enjoyed the ordinary preparatory instruction, vii. 14. It is also probable that many young persons who were educated in the schools of the prophets, at a later period, were of service to the state in other ways. Soon after the Babylonish captivity, the order of the prophets ended with Malachi, and to this circumstance mainly, has it been ascribed, that now by degrees, religion lost all spiritual life, and degenerated into that outward service in which the Jews were sunk at the time of Jesus.

The whole contents of the prophetic writings, with the exception of a few historical sections, consist of religious instruction and prophecies, which, after the manner of the book of Job, the Psalms, and the Proverbs, are set forth in devout poetical composition. These latter writings among the Hebrews, have a wholly different form, and are distinguishable from

simple historical narratives. in part, by a more copious description, and in part, by the custom to give the single parts of the discourse a definite relation to each other, so that two express the same thought in a different manner, or contain a kind of opposition to each other, or at other times, somewhat belonging to them, in which a third or fourth section of discourse has often a share. But the prophetic writings differ from the other portions of the divine word just mentioned, chiefly in this, that in the latter, inspired men have laid down their sentiments, but in the former, the prophet stands forth a public teacher in the name of God, and announces the word of the Lord; by this the discourse is so connected, that his language is elevated and solemn. The figurative mode of expressing their thought in actions, is also particularly worthy of remark. Thus Jeremiah laid a yoke upon himself, in order to indicate the impending captivity. Ezekiel relates in a like manner, that he scattered one part of his hair, burned another, and preserved a third portion, thereby to signify the fate of the people at the taking of Jerusalem. Similar typical transactions frequently appear, concerning one of which, it may be observed, that it was only narrated, Ezek. xxiv. 3, but did not really occur. The same thing appears indeed elsewhere, though it is not improbable that many of them were real transactions, not mere narrations. The ground of this mode of communicating thought, is the same as in the parables of our Saviour. By it necessary truths were presented in a sensuous, and as it were a tangible way, to the sensual people, more deeply imprinted, and more easily retained by the memory.

The prophetic writings which have come down to us, may be divided according to their extent, as they are greater or smaller, hence arises the usual appellation of the four great, and twelve minor prophets, or they can be divided according to the nations to whom the prophecies refer. Some have reference to the heathen only, (Jonah, Nahum, Obadiah), the

others have reference to the people of God, and some to the kingdom of the ten tribes in particular, (Hosea, Joel, Amos), but the most of them refer to the kingdom of Judah. or they may be divided according to the time in which the prophets lived and acted. The last mentioned particular, however, can only be conjecturally given, about some, viz. Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habbakkuk, and Malachi. The following order is not far from the truth.

a) under Uzziah. Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah lived 1), Joel 2), Amos 3), Hosea 4), Micah 5), Isaiah

b). Sometime after them, and still before the Babylonish captivity, 6), Nahum 7), Obadiah 8), Jonah 9), Habakkuk

c.) A short time before, and during the captivity, 10), Zephaniah 11), Jeremiah 12), Ezekiel 13), Daniel

d.) After the captivity 14), Haggai 15), Zechariah 16), Malachi.

THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

Isaiah may be compared to the eagle, who, in his bold flight, ascending to the sun, at a height far above all mountains of the earth, disappears from the astonished sight. So is his eye continually turned to divine things; accordingly he is ever elevated above every thing common and earthly, and because of this, his writings are frequently incomprehensible to the superficial reader.

Concerning the circumstances of his life we know but little, he was the son of Amos, i. 1. The saying of the Rabbins, that he was the brother of Amaziah the king, has much in its favour, and explains particularly the high estimation in which he was held, during the government of four Jewish kings. In the last year of king Uzziah he began his renowned career, and after that, according to tradition, he had lived in complete retirement, under the government of Jotham. Under Ahaz he worked the more

restlessly, when his counsel was seldom attended to, and under Hezekiah, whose reign he adorned. After the memorable sickness of Hezekiah, we have not indeed any definite note of time concerning him in his writings. But, according to the tradition of the Jews, he lived to the time of Manasseh and by this ungodly king was condemned to be sawn asunder.

A citizen of the state of Judah, he prophesied mostly against it, and for it. This small state, appearing to him the most important among all the nations, was, after a deserved, but temporary chastisement, to become distinguishingly prosperous, and to bring to all nations the great salvation, the true worship of God, and continual peace. In all this he commanded them to trust in God alone, and not in human help, chap. lx. Yet though Jerusalem and the hill of Zion ever remained the centre of his sayings, his views, notwithstanding, were occasionally directed to near and distant nations; to the near and distant future. His prophecies treated of the kingdom of Israel, whose carrying away into the Babylonish captivity he lived to see, and also referred to other small and neighbouring nations, Moab, Idumea, Syria; at the same time, to the powerful Babel, the rich Tyre, the proud Egypt, and the mighty Assyria, which God made the instrument of chastising his small state. Do we consider him as a teacher of religion and morality; it was ever his chief concern to make divine worship more spiritual;—to represent idolatry in its ridiculousness and perverseness; and to impress more deeply on the mind faith in the true God. Against the light-mindedness which thought to have propitiated God by outward offerings, unaccompanied by godly sorrow;—against hypocrisy, which expressed itself in fasting;—against dissimulation, which believed itself entitled to do all manner of violence, as soon as it had fully observed the ceremonies of the law, he stood forth boldly with the power and unquenchable zeal of a divine am-

bassador. The promise and picture of a happier period is ever a distinguishing feature of true piety. He expects not future salvation from outward ceremonies. Would the Israelites serve the God who had chosen them? would they escape from impending danger? would they accelerate the coming of a better time? He gave them counsel as follows:— Wash you, make ye clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow. But he saw well, beforehand, that his counsel would not be followed; and even this excited him sometimes to holy zeal, as a servant of God; sometimes to still sadness as a member of the nation, because they would not allow themselves to be helped. In all his threatenings he never forgets to add, that the people brought their own misery upon themselves; and reminds them of the ingratitude with which they had requited their great benefactor. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, and my people do not consider. The strict reproofs of the prophet affect, indeed, the whole people. Ah! he cries, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity: the whole head is sick, the whole heart faint, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there is 'no soundness in him. But this man of God reprimanded, severely, the feelings of the higher classes; from which evil flowed forth:—the royal counsellors, the judges, the priests, the wealthy. A man who knew the life of the chief persons at court, from his own observation, felt himself stirred up in opposition to the violence which extorted the last mite of the poor and the widow; and the extravagant expenditure, and quickly dissipated again what had been so unjustly acquired: this punitive preaching thus touches, in addition to the people, chiefly their princes, whom he calls princes of Sodom, rebels, robbers; and, particularly, their shameless injustice, their haughtiness, their

trust in man, and their blindness that they would not recognize the will and providence of God.

That God, who had presented before the eye of the prophet the mournful picture of the near future, also permitted him to view, for the consolation of himself and the good of his people, the salvation which futurity was to bring. Before his prophetic view, the dark womb of futurity is unfolded. He sees, as having fallen, the mighty nations which had oppressed Israel; he sees, on the throne of David, the great descendant upon whom would rest the spirit of the Lord; the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. He sees the servant of the Lord who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. He beholds the mountain of Zion raised over all the mountains, and exalted above the hills. He beholds the heathen go on a pilgrimage thereto, and hears the people say, come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths, ii. 1—5; ix. 1—6; xi. 1—14; xl. 1—11; lii. 13; liii. 12.

The expressions and representations given by him, like the thoughts, are great and sublime. He spake not in his own name, but by the authority of the Lord. Therefore his speech was elevated by his spirit. Thought upon thought crowds upon his soul. Therefore, he had only a short time to express them in few words. What he has said is all solemn, and a higher dignity is found over all. Where he threatens there all hearts become weak, and all hands heavy. Where he comforts, there it is as if the help were already at hand. The richness and beauty of his comparisons, which he has drawn from the shepherd's cot even to the palace of kings; the splendour of his copious descriptions, and also the brevity of the representation, from which often, here and there obscurity arises, life and strength of expression, side by side, with fulness and grandeur of thought, are the

distinguishing characteristics of his writings. The particular instructions and prophecies contained in this book, stand in different order from that in which they did when Isaiah wrote them. It would appear, first of all, they consisted of small collections, as did the Psalms and Proverbs; and, from their combination, the larger work was made as we now have it.

Indeed, the first collection consisted of chap. i.—ix. 7. The superscription of which, (the vision of Judah and Jerusalem.) is adapted only to them, because the others contain visions also respecting foreign nations. This was naturally the most important in relation to the Jews, and appears to have been arranged thus by Isaiah himself, but was soon enlarged by the three following chapters, which contain prophecies relating to Israel, Assyria, and the Messiah.

Chap. xiii.—xxi. contain obviously prophecies relating to foreign nations. The following section xxii. to xxxv. contain promiscuous prophecies against Jerusalem, against Israel, and other nations, together with single portions full of consolations for the former. In the four next chapters, xxxvi.—xxxix. we have a history very little different from that which we find in 2 Kings xviii.—xx. The only difference is, that there is given in the former a song of praise of Hezekiah after his recovery. Now, how is it that in a prophetic book we find this historical section? Isaiah himself, as did many of the prophets, wrote the history of his own times, particularly of Uzziah, 2 Chron. xxvi. 22, and Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 32, and a glance informs us, as has often been remarked already, that they who compiled the books of Kings and Chronicles used the earlier historical works of the prophets. But at the time the prophecies of Isaiah were put together into one book, the books of Kings had not yet been collected. It was very natural to insert here, for the instruction of readers, this historical section to which the greater number of the prophecies relate. On chapters xl.—lxvi. there fol-

lows again a particular collection, many single portions of which refer chiefly to the captivity of Babylon, and the return of the Jews to their father-land. They are more copious and plain than the early prophecies, and contain the clearest predictions relative to the Messiah. Chap. liii. in particular, has been designated the gospel of the Old Testament. Whilst in the earlier prophecies, the prophet has expressed much holy zeal against the sins of the people; in these we meet rather with calm submission to Divine Providence, together with blessed expectations of a happier futurity.

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

There appear in the discourses of this prophet the same dolefulness, the same soft lamentation, a similar indignation at enemies, as we meet with in the Psalms of David. He was a son of Hilkiyah the priest, i. 1, and was born in Anathoth, a city of the priests, xx. 27.

When young, he was introduced into the prophetic office by the express command of God, and acted as a prophet, after he had departed from his native city, which was remarkable for unbelief. In Jerusalem, he did not meet with a more believing temper on the part of the people. His prophetic career continued very long, namely from the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, who was the last good king, through the reign of Joash, Jehoiakim, Jehoiakin, Zedekiah, and even many years longer, after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the flight into Egypt. He also knew better times. Although the neighbouring state of Israel had long groaned under the Assyrian captivity, though Judah itself had been brought to the brink of destruction by Manasseh and Ammon: yet, under the good government of Josiah, matters seemed to recover, and to flourish anew. But under the subsequent kings, Judah hastened more and more quickly into ruin. With all this the priests lay in indolent repose, and dreamed only of peace. False

prophets prophesied deliverance; in the midst of all the misery great debauchery prevailed; and this man alone, who knew the truth, and spake it openly, was misunderstood, hated, scoffed at, and persecuted. Full of deep sorrow, he advised them in eloquent complaint, to avail themselves of the yet only way whereby to be able to hold what remained of the land and the city, even willing submission to the dominion of Babylon. All resistance must be fruitless, and could only draw after it the destruction of the city, the spoiling of the land, the captivity of the people, and the ruin of the king. But neither with the king, nor the people, did he find faith, but exposed himself only to stripes, to imprisonment, and the danger of death. When at last Jerusalem was actually taken, as he had so often foretold, then he found that esteem from his enemies which his countrymen had refused to give him. They delivered him from prison, and gave him his choice either to go with them to Babylon, or to remain behind in the land. He preferred the latter; and wept over the ruins of Jerusalem. After the murder of Gedaliah, the governor from Babylon, the Jews who remained, contrary to his advice, fled to Egypt, and took him with them against his will, yet still in Egypt he complained, and warned in vain against the idolatry to which his countrymen had given themselves over.

From what has been already stated, we can conjecture beforehand the contents and the mode of statement in his writings. Two different collections may be perceived in them. The first, chapter i.—xlv. comprehends the domestic prophecies: partly before the destruction of Jerusalem, i.—xxxix; partly after it, xl.—xlv. It contains the announcement of it, and lamentation concerning it, in very different ways. By discourses and typical representations, the prophet announces to his people the impending ruin, directs them to the one living and true God, from whom they had departed, and assures them that idolatry was the cause of all their evils. Often historical relations

are blended, which, in part, prepared for the prophecies and instructions ; and, in part, were designed to declare their consequences. Sometimes his divinely inspired mind stretches beyond his own doleful time ; promises return from the Babylonish captivity ; even definitely announcing seventy years, xxv. 11 ; and raises itself to the lovely hope of the age of the Messiah ; and the Messiah himself, chap. xxxiii. the manner of expression is accordingly clear, intelligible, and full of easily comprehended images ; more detailed than concise and crowded, more distinguished by the soft and lovely, than the elevated. It resembles the still flowing deep water, more than the roaring torrent. The tenderness of his sensibility, which almost made him incapable to express the severe threatenings, is manifest in his mournful lamentations, in his affecting prayers for better times, in his sympathy for a people who conceived they did not need his sympathy ; yet his sensibility did not degenerate into weakness or faint-heartedness. A state of mind which would have been unworthy of a true servant of God, and friend of his country, who had to counsel in the most distressing times. Hence also he was zealous as Isaiah had been against the delinquency of the people and the nobles, against the formal religion of the priests, against the deception of the false prophets. Hence he proclaims loudly that departure from the law, and the faith of their fathers, was the ground of all their misery—the breaking in of which could not be prevented by any human power, but only by a return to the God of their fathers. Affected only for the people and not for himself, he submitted to indignities, he did not avoid the reproach that he was the betrayer of his country, and in league with the Babylonians ; and he was, during the siege, cast into a deep pit, where he had to stand in mud and water.

The second collection, from chap. xlvi.—li., contains prophecies against foreign nations who were in alliance with the Israelites. Here Jeremiah rises, in

his threatenings, to such elevation, he speaks with such strength and power, his usual state of softness assumes such an elevation of manner, that his prophecies here may be put side by side with those of Isaiah. The conclusion, in the lii. chap., is made up of a historical narrative respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, and the freedom granted to Jehoiachim at Babylon. During his long career, Jeremiah was contemporary with many other prophets; Zephaniah prophesied with him under Josiah, though only for a short period; then he continued a long time alone, to the time of Ezekiel, seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and Daniel soon after, who both united their voices with his, among the captive Jews.

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

What the prophet had predicted as future, he laments here as having actually taken place. Who does not willingly lend his ear to this tone of sadness; to this complaint of a religious mind; which considers the downfall of his country as the consequence of sin: as a punishment from God? And who had more just cause to utter complaints than he who witnesses the ruins of his father-land?

The subject of these five poems of lamentation, is the destruction of Jerusalem, and the carrying away of the people, apart from any consideration of the consequences of this occurrence. Already according to the first, Jerusalem is completely in ruins, and the people themselves sigh under the load of misery which God had laid upon them. Recollection of their earlier prosperity makes this complaint still more doleful. The second repeats, in regular succession, all the terrors of the siege and conquest; the destruction of the palace, the temple, the walls, the gates, the miseries of the hunger, and concludes with a sigh to God.

In the third the prophet describes his own lot, at the time referred to, Jer. xxxviii. 6., yet so that he may be considered at the same time as the representative and speaker for the people, or as a type of suffering for the people; he concludes with words of hope and trust.

The fourth portrays, in accordance with the second, the first moments after the conquest. The fifth contains a mournful prayer for the captive Jews. The order in which the songs of lamentation follow each other appears to represent the degrees of misery, according to their respective gradations. In the first, the lamentation is soft and composed; in the second, it is more noisy and bitter; in the third it passes to imprecations; in the fourth it ascends to apparent despair, and then the prophet having, as it were, exhausted himself, sinks down from his highest elevation, to intercession.

According to 2 Chron. xxxv. 25, Jeremiah composed a poem of lamentation upon the death of king Josiah. As it is not found here, it must either have been lost, or perhaps it is referred to. Jer. xxii. 10. xii. and 18.

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

Ezekiel was the son of Buzi, a priest, and was among the ten thousand Jews of higher degree, who were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, with Jehoiachim into captivity. He dwelt by the river Chebar, i. 3. In the fifth year of his captivity, seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem, he appeared as a prophet, and served in the office, at least, till the twenty-seventh year of his captivity, or the fifteenth after the fall of the city, xxix. 17, which he had predicted, probably he continued much longer. As Jeremiah addressed the Jews who remained in Palestine; so he spake to his fellow captives; these had conceived the foolish idea that Jerusalem could hold out much

longer ; yea, that it could contend, and ultimately effect its freedom. Now, against this, the prophet vied with strict earnestness.

His writings are divided into three sections ; the first twenty-four chapters contain prophecies upon the destruction of Jerusalem, which are mostly set forth in picturesque images, together with punitive discourses respecting the universal degeneracy of the people. But our prophet speaks in a manner wholly different from the soft, gentle Jeremiah, he did not, more than the latter, live to see the good time, he knew only a corrupted age. Far from a sympathising complaint, he was only penetrated by the thought that the people had deserved their own misery. He continually selects new images, and carries them to their minutest traits, and paints them to the view of his readers and hearers ; his pictures are magnificent, terrible, heart-stirring ; one hears in him as of the herald who announced the displeasure of God. The second section, xxv—xxxii. contains prophecies against foreign nations. These have all the power, greatness, terribleness, and copiousness included in the first portion, especially distinguished are those against Tyre and Egypt.

The passages which are contained in the third section, xxxiii.—xlviii. were composed after the destruction of Jerusalem ; and gave, besides, many instructions, promises, also relative to the future, which became always more magnificent, and mention too the Messiah, xxxiv. 23. Whereas the commencement of the book is distinguished by the mournful and terrific, the manner at the close, is consolatory and joyful.

First ; the hope of a gathering together of the nation, is expressed under the image of a dead body coming again to life ; and more obedience and faith, than were hitherto expected of it, xxxiv.—xxxvii. Then follows a description of the great victory over Gog and Magog, by which names we are to understand generally, powerful enemies of

the Israelites, xxxviii.—xxxix. In fine, the prophet in the spirit, xlvi.—xlviii. sees the rebuilding of the city and temple; a partition of the land among the twelve tribes. The arrangement of a new state, and a stream which, flowing through the midst of the land, renders it more lovely and fertile.

The Jewish teachers have understood this portion literally, and, as on this ground, they have observed many direct contradictions to the ordinances of Moses, they have maintained the last chapters were not written by Ezekiel, but this is a wrong opinion. Ezekiel had no intention to alter any ordinance of Moses, but only to describe, figuratively, the return of the people, and a new and flourishing condition of the state. Thus other prophets also had spoken before him; Isaiah xi. Jeremiah xxxiii. The later prophets have always described, more copiously, what the earlier had intimated, only in a few words; and it is wholly in the spirit of Ezekiel, not to leave off from his description until he had exhausted his object on all sides.

DANIEL.

Daniel, when yet very young, was carried away into captivity, before Ezekiel; in the fourth year of Jehoiachim, upon the command of Nebuchadnezzar, he was instructed in the wisdom of the Chaldeans, and soon surpassed all his school-fellows. Though he was yet young, he did not become weakened in attachment to the religion of his fathers, either by the entreaties or threats of the victors. By the successful interpretation of a dream, which Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed, he raised himself to the dignity of president of the magi. His estimation among the heathen was very great; and, because he remained true to his religion, he drew upon himself persecutions and trials, in which the protection of his God was gloriously displayed. But the general esteem was increased towards him by the circumstance that

he was a man who held fast his conviction, against the will even of the king. The estimation in which he was held by the Jews of his and later ages, was still higher. They reckoned in him not merely dignity of birth, descended, as he was, from the royal family: they valued him still more for his piety and wisdom, Ezek. xiv. 14; xxviii. 3.

After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, who had treated him as a benefactor, Daniel went into retirement; and, from this state, he was called forth again by Belshazzar, on the last day of his reign, on account of his wisdom, chap. v. Also by the Medo-Persian government, which succeeded, vi. 1, he was held in much esteem, and, undoubtedly, contributed much in procuring for his countrymen the right to return to their father land. The preceding particulars are narrated to us in the first portion of our book, from chap. i. to vi. Daniel is to be called a prophet not in the same sense as other prophets were, namely, as a divine instructor of the people, or as a person who mediated between them and their king; but he was a prophet in the strict sense of the word, inasmuch as he foretold future events.

In the second portion of this book, chap. vii.—xii., real prophecies have been put together by him, which foretel the histories of mighty kingdoms, centuries before, and which have been justified by the events. Although these prophecies are tolerably copious, and accompanied by new additions, it is natural to think that much remains dark to us which was easily understood at that time. Of these, undoubtedly, the most important is the beautiful description of Messiah and his reign, contained in chap. vii. 13, 14, and the way and manner in which this is compared with the other earthly kingdoms, and opposed to them. Even John, in his Revelation, had respect to these prophecies as also to the last of Ezekiel. The first prophecy in chap. vii. extends very far. Therein are described, under the figures of four wild beasts, the Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greco-Persian kingdoms; and, at the same time, the kingdom of

Syria, which arose out of the Greco-Persian, and concludes with the account of judgment on the last, and the yielding up of the sovereignty to the Messiah, (according to another exposition, the Median kingdom is said to be passed over, and that described last would, in this case, be the Roman.) The following prophecy, chap. viii. contains, in part, an explanation, and describes the ruin of the kingdom of Persia, and the partition of the Grecian empire into four parts; in one of which, namely, Syria, was to arise an oppressor of the Jewish people. The same is foretold also in the ix. chapter and with particular reference to the seventy years foretold by Jeremiah, xxv. 11, and with the remark, that by the phrase seventy years, we are to understand, not years simply, but weeks of years, consequently four hundred and ninety years; but, at the same time, also destruction is predicted to the oppressor.

In the following most copious prophecies, chap. x.—xii. is predicted the overthrow of the kingdom of Persia, and the formation and partition of the Grecian. Herein, especially, are narrated separately, the fortunes of the Syrian and Egyptian kingdoms. Their alliances and wars which arose out of the former. At the end, there follows a description of Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of Syria, who here bears the name of the King of the North, as well as his connection with the family of the king of Egypt, his craft and wars against the Egyptians, his efforts to destroy the Jewish worship, and to introduce, in the room thereof, the Grecian, and his terrible overthrow.

THE PROPHET HOSEA.

Hosea lived, chap. i. 1, under the reigns of the Jewish kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, also at the same time with Isaiah, and probably some years earlier than he. He was a citizen of the kingdom of Israel, against which the greater number of his prophecies are directed. At the beginning of

his prophetic career, i. 1, Jeroboam the Second reigned, under whom the people were greatly raised from their oppressed state, 2 Kings xiv. 27. But, soon after his death, misery ensued; and, in forty years, which elapsed till the Assyrian captivity, the state was continually disturbed;—betimes it had no kings; betimes it had them again,—and the weak state sought help from Assyria and Egypt, whereby it sinned yet the more. Our prophet denounced these alliances, the inclination to idolatry, the total departure from God, and all the vices that consequently arose in kings, and priests, and people,—and predicts a new captivity, whilst he reminds them of the bondage in Egypt. Only, in a few words, he sometimes gives a glance upon the kingdom of Judah. In his manner of description he differs altogether from the others, that he heaps images and similies upon each other, and expands them no farther, in consequence of which he is frequently obscure. He loves, particularly, to make allusions to the ancient history of the people, and their ancestor Jacob. Many of his images, particularly in the first chapters, must have made a deep impression on the people. Under the figure of an untrue consort was described the idolatry of the people, who had so shamefully forsaken Jehovah, their highest benefactor, and the names of the children of Israel, Lo-ruhamah Lo-ammi, declare the miseries which would ensue to the people. Jerome remarks of him:—If we, for the understanding of all the prophets, need the assistance of the Holy Spirit to explain what he himself gave, how much more necessary is it for the illustration of Hosea to beseech the Lord, and to say with Peter, show us the similitude, especially as he himself, at the end of his writing, hath attested to the darkness which hangs over it, where he says, chap. xiv. 9, Who is wise and he shall understand these things; prudent, and he shall know them?

Nevertheless, Hosea also was permitted to cast a look of expectation on a more auspicious future.

Afterwards shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter day. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies, I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, I will have mercy upon her that obtained not mercy, and I will say to them which were not my people, thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God.

THE PROPHET JOEL.

Joel has not determined precisely the time of his life and labours, and the few marks in his writings are not sufficient to determine his time with complete certainty. Since Amos, who lived in the first half of the government of Uzziah, appears to have known his prophecies, and read them, we may assume that Joel lived before him. By this Joel appears to have been the earliest of all the prophets, a circumstance favoured by many things in his writings.

There are only three of his prophecies which are directed against Judah, in the first one there is a very striking description of a devastation by locusts, a matter not unusual in the hot regions of the East, probably designed to represent by a figure the hostile invasion of an army. In the second were promised prosperity and fertility of the earth, as well as the piety of the people, in the age of the Messiah. But particularly remarkable is the prophecy, the fulfilment of which Peter points out on the day of Pentecost, and generally in the times of the New Testament, and which Peter quoted, see Acts 2d chap. And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And it

shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered, for upon mount Zion and Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and on the remnant whom the Lord shall call. In fine, there are righteous judgments from God, threatened against the people who oppressed the Israelites. His diction is flowing, and rich in manifold varieties and representations. It is inexhaustible in the most striking pictures, and in threatenings as well as promises.

THE PROPHET AMOS.

Amos lived, i. 1, in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and Jeroboam the Second, king of Israel, against which latter king he prophesied, vii. 11. Next to Joel he is the oldest prophet from whom we have writings. Originally he was a herdsman at Tekoa, a village situated near Jerusalem, i. 1. As a prophet he appeared particularly in the kingdom of Israel, which, under Jeroboam, was in a condition of much outward prosperity, a matter he has frequently noticed, ii. 13—16. iii. 11. v. 3. vi. 2. But the kingdom had declined very much in respect of religion and morals, and had become sunk in debauchery, particularly at Bethel, where Amos spake. In the discharge of his spiritual office he had many things to suffer, and because of his prophecies threatening calamities, he was even banished at last out of the kingdom of Israel, vii. 11, 12. With him also, as with all the other prophets, we find a joyful looking forward to the far distant future, the period of the Messiah, ix. 11. This hope continually mitigated the threatenings, and reminded of the peculiar relation between God and the people, and of his great plan to make happy the whole family of mankind. At the beginning also we find some prophecies against foreign nations. But they all stand in some connexion with each other, here and there we meet with views imparted to Amos, the types of what was to follow. Amos hath many

pictures, which, like his royal predecessor David, he took from the shepherd's field.

OBADIAH.

That Obadiah lived at the same time with Jeremiah, may be inferred, not only from his strict accordance with Jeremiah, xlix. 7—15. but also that at his time Jerusalem had already been destroyed. v. 11—14, and the Jews already captive, v. 17—21; but the destruction of the Edomites, against whom Obadiah prophesied, was yet impending. They had been very hostile against the Jews on the downfall of the kingdom of Judah, had expressed loudly joy at their calamity, and treated badly those that remained. For that reason, Obadiah now threatens ruin also to them, and which really did come upon them, five years after the destruction of Jerusalem. He concludes with the hope, which is peculiar to all the prophets, that at a future time the Israelites would enjoy new prosperity.

We do not know from Obadiah whether or not he composed any other works besides the short prophecy which has come down to us.

THE PROPHET JONAH.

According to 2 Kings xiv. 25, Jonah, the son of Amittai, under the reign of Jereboam the Second, prophesied of the great prosperity of Israel. The prophecy has not come down to us. We have, on the contrary, in the prophetic work which bears his name, no advices and prophecies, as in the other prophets, but a narrative which is very remarkable. This shews to the attentive reader that he must search out the instruction in the narrative itself. Indeed it is rich in the most remarkable lessons, not only for the Israelites, but also for us. The whole appears to have

been designed particularly as a lesson for the order of the prophets. Jonah resembles Elijah, who once felt the burden of his calling, and prayed to God for death when sitting under a juniper tree, 1 Kings xix. 4; and then received a divine revelation and admonition for his weakness; and he was then immediately sent, as a servant of God, to a heathen king. In fact, we find here also nearly all the faults which could have caused guilt to the prophets; resistance against the divine call, a striving after his own reputation, unwillingness to announce chastisements, delayed on account of amelioration, as well as a partial preference for the Israelites, who are forcibly depicted in their entire worthiness of chastisement. Each prophet must have seen here, as in a glass, his particular call, and the insufficiency of man to walk worthy of this call. How well could the Israelites, who were accustomed to think of other nations so contemptuously, learn from this, that they were often far surpassed by the heathen in goodness of heart and feeling—that God is the God of the heathen also; and as he had compassion on them, in like manner it became his servants to feel compassion towards them, and to do for them works full of generosity. In the representation of a strange people, they would learn what, through their guilt, their own history could not witness, that threatened punishments are averted in the event of a people becoming better. Even the simple-minded could learn there that man cannot escape from God, that he is every where, even in the depths of the sea, and whilst he can punish the delinquent, in like manner he can deliver the truly penitent. All this is drawn up with such truth and dignity, and with so much plainness, that this short prophetic book, in particular, is one of the richest in instruction. The excellent prayer of thanksgiving by Jonah, is distinguished by a particular grace, which reminds of many places in the Psalms.

A reader of the Bible, who has penetrated in this manner into the spirit of the book, and has found the

kernel in the shell, will by no means feel much perplexed by the scoffs which, in rich measure, have been cast against this book in particular. To escape from these scoffs, many have thought they found here, as in the Song of Solomon, rather doctrine, than the history of real events, the author of which had in view to bring forward in this form of representation some truths highly necessary for the people and the prophets, and yet often mistaken by the prophets. This is not the place to vindicate or oppose this view. It is sufficient to observe, that even this opinion may peaceably be held in full consistence with the most perfect esteem for the Bible as a divine book, as Luther hath remarked already.^a

THE PROPHET MICAH.

Micah, according to the superscription of his book, was a native of Moresheth, a city of Judah, and lived in the times of Ahaz, Jotham, and Hezekiah, and probably of Manasseh too. He was referred to by Jeremiah xxvi. 18, but is not to be confounded with Micaiah, the son of Imli, who lived and prophesied under Ahab, 1 Kings xxii. 8, 9. That our prophet lived under Manasseh, appears from the sharp censures made upon Judah, and which could apply to that country only under his government; from the allusion to the captivity at Babylon, iv. 9—14; and from the worship of Baal, vi. 16; which had been introduced by Manasseh.

His prophecies consist of four parts; in the first, chap. i., Samaria and Jerusalem were threatened

^a The reader may find a statement of the objections which have been made against the real historical character of the Book of Jonah, with answers, and a statement of the reasons for believing it a real history, in Dr. Jahn's Introduction to the Old Testament.

That this book narrates real occurrences, is put beyond question, from the references to it by our Saviour, Matt. xii. 39—47; xvi. 4; Luke xi. 29—32.—*Note by Translator.*

sharply, and the destruction of the former foretold. As that ensues, the prophet accordingly directed his attention, in what follows, to Judah alone. The second blames the injustice of the great, threatens them likewise with destruction, but concludes with delightful prospects, chap. ii. In the third, 3—5, the same threatenings and promises are more amply delineated and repeated. The former announces the impending captivity, the latter rises particularly to a representation of the Messiah's kingdom, in which it is even declared that Bethlehem would be the birth-place of the coming Messiah. In the fourth, 6—7, are similar lamentations, threatenings, and promises.

The style in Micah's writings is very beautiful, and well chosen, his comparisons are lovely and striking, his representation in particular of the injustice of the Israelites is full of life. His expressions are often concise and dark, and remind one of Isaiah, who was his contemporary. His prophecy of the kingdom of Messiah is one of the most precise of the Old Testament. Now he paints with living colours the mournful state of his time. Where the pious people perish ; where each one lieth in wait for another, that he may destroy him ; where the judges speak only according to favour ; and the violent men counsel according to their desire ; where the best of them is as a brier, and the most upright as a thorn. Then there must be a rule of prudence. Keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. Where the son discovereth the father. The daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law ; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. He paints in an equally touching and beautiful manner, the period which the Messiah would introduce, vii. 19. God will have compassion on us. The nations shall be confounded, they shall lay their hand upon their mouth ; their ears shall be deaf.

The walls shall be built again, and the word of God come forth, v. 7, and the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass. Then will come forth out of Bethlehem, he who is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting, iv. 2. Then will the heathen go and say, come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways; and we will walk in his paths, and they shall beat their swords into plough shares. and their spears into pruning hooks; and they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig tree; and none shall make him afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. A great part of the obscurity incident to this book falls away when we remember that Micah, after the manner of the other sacred writers, particularly in the last chapters, has introduced different parties as speaking: One time God; again the people; again himself, without always remarking whose turn it is.

NAHUM.

Nahum, it is true, has notified to us the place of his birth, i. 1; but not of the time when he lived. Yet from his prophecies we may infer the latter, without much trouble; as he announced the fall of Nineveh, which took place about the commencement of the government of Jehoiakim, he must have prophesied before this. That he lived considerably earlier, even in the first years of Hezekiah, may be gathered from his allusions to the downfall of Sennacherib. The place of his birth is Elkos. Now there were two cities of this name; the one in Galilee, the other in Assyria. In the latter of these two places they show to this day the real or supposed grave of the prophet. Should the latter opinion be real, accordingly Nahum was a descendant of the kingdom of Israel,—he was born in the Assyrian captivity,—

he consoled himself that Judah was still standing ; and, for the comfort of his own mind, and his fellow captives, he uttered a prophecy concerning the fall of Nineveh, the chief city of Assyria : accordingly, he was to his captive fellow-citizens what, in later times, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, were to the captive Jews. He begins by describing the divine greatness and righteousness, passes to the great wickedness of Nineveh, comforts Judah, and then describes the taking of Nineveh in such lively colours, that one, in reading the description, must fancy himself an eye-witness of the scene. Altogether in the spirit of the prophets, he first directs the thoughts of his readers to God, from whom providences come. "God is jealous, and the Lord avengeth and is furious. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt. Who can stand before his indignation. But he is favourable to chastened penitent Israel." "For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bands in sunder." On the contrary, a grievous chastisement awaits their oppressors. "No more of thy name shall be sown. Out of the house of thy God will I cut off the graven image and the molten image. I will make thy grave, for thou art vile." Already the army draws nigh that was to punish Nineveh. "The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet, their chariots glance like fire, their spears are terribly shaken." With trembling spirit the city prepares for a vain defence. "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved, and Mozzah shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves tabering upon their breasts." The most terrible destruction follows. "There shall the fire devour thee, the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the canker worm, make thyself many as the locusts."

When we ask if this prophecy was fulfilled, history answers, yes. After that Nineveh, under the reign of Sardanapalus, and before the lifetime of our

prophet, was destroyed by Arbazes and Belesis. Nevertheless, it rose to a new state of splendour and power, and became very oppressive to neighbouring nations. If the foregoing date of the lifetime of Nahum be right, the second total overthrow of Nineveh by Cyaxares and Nabopalasser must have taken place about one hundred years after him, under the Assyrian king Chyniladan.

His diction is elevated, noble, and florid, full of splendid paintings and images. The style of the prophet is always elevated, when he had occasion to speak against strange nations, and in particular their oppressors; but when he had occasion to announce harm against his own people, his discourse breathes a spirit of sadness, and plaintive sympathy.

THE PROPHET HABAKKUK.

Of the personal circumstances of Habakkuk we know nothing. Probably he lived to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

The contents of his short writings hang closely together. He begins with a lament because of the depravity of his people, i. 1—4. Then he describes the Chaldeans, who hastened to their overthrow, 5—11; he prays to God for his people, 12—17, and receives an answer that Babylon in like manner would be destroyed, ii. 1, 2. Then he describes the march of God against his enemies, chap. iii. with representations which remind us of Moses, Deut. xxxiii. 13, and David, Psalm xviii. 34, and concludes with a psalm of thanksgiving. As Nahum threatened the Assyrian, so did Habakkuk the Babylonian oppressors of his people with deserved destruction.

As the contents of this brief prophecy are here and there obscure, by the elevation of the thoughts, and the conciseness of the expression; yet all intelligent persons agree, that the writer was one of the most accomplished men, of whom the knowledge has come down to us from antiquity. With Habakkuk

all is elevated and expressive of awe ; his threatenings are terrible : his lamentations mild ; all his representations affecting, and are composed as it were in the manner of Moses. In the terrible description of the Chaldeans, we perceive a great similitude to the manner of Isaiah at the xiii. chapter ; and whom Habakkuk resembles more than any other of the prophets.

THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH.

In the inscription, Zephaniah gives us, not only the period when he lived ; but also his ancestry, which he traces back to his great great grandfather. This person, who bears the name Hezekiah, is probably the king of that name. And hereby is explained why the prophet, contrary to the custom of others, has carried his pedigree so far backward. From the first year of the reign of Hezekiah to the last of Josiah, there elapsed one hundred and ten years, a period which is sufficient to account for the existence of a great great grandson. Under the reign of good Josiah, the book of the law of Moses was found again ; and the worship of God regulated according to it. Notwithstanding this, there may have been still remnants of the worship of Baal, against which the prophet zealously contends, Zeph. i. 4. and the best intentions of the king may have been insufficient to stem that tide of corruption which long had been flowing into the land. The reign of Josiah was the last bright period for the state of Judah. According to the description by Zephaniah, idolatry prevailed among the people ; violence in the judges ; indiscretion in the prophets ; and hypocrisy in the priests. We have only three prophecies from him, chap. i. 2, 3, against Judah, chap. ii. 4—15, against foreign nations, chap. iii, again, against Judah, nevertheless, after the manner of the prophets, connected with consolations and promises.

‘ For then will I turn to the people a pure language,

that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with consent. In that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem, fear thou not, and to Zion, let not thy hands be black."

It is peculiar to him, that he reminds the people of the nearness of the divine chastisement, which soon also began to take place. His pictures and representations agree with those of the earlier prophets. He resembles the later, in copiousness and plainness.

THE PROPHET HAGGAI.

Haggai lived and prophesied among the Jews, who were carried back by Zerubbabel from the captivity at Babylon. He aroused them to the building of the temple. This, indeed, at first, was permitted by Cyrus; but, at the instigation of the Samaritans, who had no sympathy with the Jews in this matter, the permission was withdrawn by him, and was maintained by his successors. But when Darius again permitted and favoured it, nothing stood against it more than the almost inconceivable unconcern of the Jews themselves; and who were solicitous only for suitable dwelling-houses; and were satisfied with an altar of burnt offering instead of the temple. Under these circumstances Haggai appears, and announces that the failure of the foregoing year, and their continued hardness, were a chastisement for their great indifference; and now he saw, even as a consequence of his discourse, that the work was undertaken, chap. i. The discontent of the Jews, that, on account of their poverty, they would not be able to build a temple so splendid as the former, he opposed by the promise, that costly gifts should be brought there by all people, ii. 1—9. After this, he describes, as impure, the sacrifices which were offered on the altar of burnt-offerings, 10—19; and, finally, gives an important promise to Zerubbabel, who had contributed much to the re-

building of the temple. Haggai accompanies his prophecy with historical notices.

THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH.

According to Ezra, chap. v. 1, Zechariah, together with Haggai, admonished the Jews to rebuild the temple. Intimations of this are given in his book. Of his personal circumstances we know nothing, except what he has mentioned, chap. i. 1, that he was a son of Berechiah, and was called to the discharge of the prophetic office a few months after Haggai, and in the second year of King Darius. Similar circumstances with those in which Haggai was, induced him to use similar denunciations; only his discourses were more copious and figurative. His writings are naturally divided into two parts.

The first portion, chap. i.—viii., has reference altogether to the building of the temple; and contains exhortations thereto—gives promises to the most prominent persons, Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua; and contains some instructions peculiarly suitable, under their existing circumstances. This is done principally by the prophet narrating his own history. Hence is the complaint of obscurity which has been alleged against this portion of scripture wholly unfounded, as he himself has furnished the means of exposition. Amongst the earlier prophets, he most resembles Ezekiel. In the first six chapters, he sets forth, under nine different views, the building of the temple; the prosperity of the people; the favour of God towards them, and especially their temporal and spiritual overseers. In the vii. and viii. chapters is answered the question of the Jews who remained in Babylon, whether they should continue to observe the fast-day in remembrance of the destruction of Jerusalem. The prophet told them, that their fasts had not been accompanied by, and followed with, a renewed state of the heart, in which consists the whole excellence of fasts; but informed them, if they

would improve, the days of fasting would be to them, in all time coming, holy days of joy.

The second part, chap. ix.—xiv., is wholly different from the preceding, and presents greater difficulties, as we are not altogether able to explain the historical references. The style of Zechariah here, is visibly elevated, and presents a great similitude to the manner which distinguishes the old prophets. There are many of these prophecies, which were, indeed, first completely fulfilled in Jesus, ix. 9; xi. 12, 13; xii. 10; xiii. 1; xiv. 9. Jesus also has applied the former of these prophecies to himself, as really fulfilled in him; and the apostles have shown most of the others as having reference to Christ. It was a word in season to the poor forlorn Israelites, to have presented, as it were, before their eyes, during their poverty and humiliation, a living view of the kingdom of Messiah.

THE PROPHET MALACHI.

Malachi, the last of the prophets, entered upon office later than the two preceding. He has not stated precisely his time, but it follows naturally from his prophecies. Then the second temple had been completely finished, i. 10; iii. 1, only the worship of God was not carried on in a right manner, i. 8, sacrifices were presented, which must have been reckoned unclean according to the Levitical law, i. 14. The Priests and Levites had fallen into extreme remissness, ii. 8. Many marriages had unhappily been contracted with idolatrous women, ii. 11—14. The tithes for the priests were not properly paid, iii. 8. The people, disappointed in their extravagant hopes of earthly happiness, fell into dejection of mind and ingratitude towards God. Clear circumstances which also characterize the times of Nehemiah, and point out our prophet as a contemporary. Both laboured together; the one by his commands, the other by his admonitions. Hence the principal heads of his doctrine may be perceived. He does

not direct his zeal any longer against idolatry. This was no more necessary ; and on this account also, it was almost wholly omitted by the two prophets who preceded him ; but he desired conscientiousness in the observance of the Levitical law, and a firm courageous mind which trusts in God, and does not forget anew the divine favour.

He has, in common with his two predecessors, referred to the promise by Moses, of great plenty in the event of their obedience. Now, he has stated all this simply, intelligibly, and briefly, mostly in the way of question and answer. His style, as it approaches the close, always increases in elevation. For here he comes to speak concerning the times of the Messiah, and announces that a great prophet would precede him ; one endued with the fiery zeal of Elias, who would chastise the depraved part of the nation, so that the better portion only could partake of the blessing of the Messiah's kingdom. Under these circumstances, Jesus himself acknowledged John as his forerunner, Math. xi. 10 ; xvii. 12.

With this feature are the promises of Messiah's kingdom completed. When we collect all the particular features together, which prophets have given relative to it, and form thereby a visible picture to our view, we cannot otherwise than be astonished at the exactness with which the kingdom of Jesus, and Jesus himself, were predicted of hundreds of years before ; and how, as it were, each successive prophet contributed his share to set it forth in a new point of view.

With Malachi, about four hundred and fifty years before Jesus, ended the order of the prophets. The end had been accomplished for which God had called them ; and hence the time was come when they were designed to cease. Their collected writings henceforward came into the hands of the people, and supplied, in some measure, the want of oral instruction. From this time, the Jews remained without any particular divine revelation, until the Lord appeared, whom all the prophets before had announced.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

As the rising sun is to the morning dawn, so is the New covenant, and the writings in which it is contained, to the Old covenant and its writings. In these is the preparation and the making straight of the paths; but in the New the consummation, Heb. viii. 6; ix. 11. There is the shadow,—here is the very substance, Col. ii. 17. There is childhood, under guardians and tutors,—here the sonship of God, Gal. iv. 3—6. There the law as a school-master,—here the freedom of Christ, Gal. iii. 24. There is fear,—here is love and filial trust, Heb. xii. 21. The law passes into the gospel, the old promises and prophecies are fulfilled, the longing ardent desire is satisfied. The time is come,—the Old covenant had performed its part; a newer, more glorious dispensation, and long promised, is now established by a higher Mediator.

The writings of the New Covenant, or New Testament, contain the history and terms of it. The division into canonical and apocryphal, which must be made in the consideration of the Old Testament, find no place here. Here all the separate books are canonical, that is, holy, composed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit; and, as such, are foundations and sources for faith. Jesus had indeed, not only promised the Holy Spirit to his disciples, in case of a necessary defence before the judgment seat, Matth. x. 19; but also promised the Holy Spirit as an intercessor after his death, John xiv. 16; xvi. 12—15, and these promises had their fulfilment in the result, Acts ii. 4. This held good, not only in relation to their verbal communications, but also their writings as apostles, which were equally momentous with the

former. They themselves considered their oral and written communications as alike divine, Acts xv. 28. 1 Peter i. 12. 1 Tim. iv. 1, and proved by their miracles that God had influenced them in a way altogether peculiar, Acts iii. 6; xxii. 15. With respect to Paul, in particular, to whom we are indebted for the largest number of these writings, his wonderful call to the apostolic office, Acts ix., is the fullest confirmation of this. This even the matter itself lets us not expect otherwise. Suppose God has permitted men to cast a glance upon his counsels, and has agreed that he should transmit to posterity the knowledge thereof through the medium of true and pure instruction, when a new revelation should not be imparted otherwise to each successive generation. As this has not come to pass, since Jesus taught only for a short period; and even omitted much which his disciples then were incapable of comprehending, John x. 12. Is it then imaginable that the Lord had designed matters to continue in a state, according to which his disciples would be in the greatest possible danger of error?

Nevertheless, during the lives of the apostles, single Christian churches possessed, if not all, yet many of the writings of the New Testament, some in this, others in that particular church. However, after their death, there arose an urgent necessity for a collection of these writings; and, a hundred years after, the most of these writings were acknowledged every where, by even the most remote churches. Only some few Epistles, and the Revelation of John, were not acknowledged every where, or were not considered writings of the apostles. Yet, by degrees, Christians became convinced of their genuineness too. But a complete collection of all the portions of the New Testament appeared about the end of the fourth century, long before other smaller collections of these writings had been put together, particularly in three portions, the Gospels, the Epistles of Paul, the Catholic Epistles.

The books of the New Testament may be divided into three portions, the historical,—the doctrinal, (the Epistles,)—the prophetic, (the Revelation of John.) The first forms the trunk, the second the branches, the third the blossom of the New Testament life; so that the whole New Testament appears before us a compact unity—as a living tree.

FIRST DIVISION.

OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW
TESTAMENT.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

THE larger half of the New Testament contains history, but not, as the Old Testament, the continued history of a people through many centuries, but only the history of one individual, and notices respecting the origin of the first Christian churches. Both are necessary for us. We need the history of his life, out of which to draw minute and exact knowledge concerning Jesus. The New Testament preaches faith in Jesus; and to know to have this, we must understand also the whole of his being and his person. All the exhortations in the epistles could not bring us to full faith and filial acquiescence in him, were he not as it were painted himself before our eyes in the gospels, teaching and helping, suffering and working, living and dying. Therefore the apostles always put Jesus at the foundation, Acts ii. 22; x. 36. In the application of a term long in use among the Jews, they called the narratives concerning him gospels, that is, the good news; and there were appointed in the particular churches, Evangelists, whose office was, to communicate accurate information concerning the life of Jesus, Eph. iv. 11. 1 Peter i. 12.

The representation given in our gospels is answerable to the design with which they were composed. The authors themselves step back entirely to give a fuller impression of the greatness of him whose life they describe. In the greatest conciseness and beautiful simplicity, their narratives are the most striking picture of the facts which they report. In a manner not to be mistaken, dignity and unction are expressed in their descriptions, which the earliest and most intimate acquaintance with the writings of the Old Testament imparted to their mode of representation. But even out of these Old Testament Scriptures they have drawn the truest adornment for the hero of their history; they have shown the promises of the same as fulfilled in his person; they have mentioned the marks of the Messiah, which each sacred writer gave, and shown the union of all in Jesus; they add to the history of the Old Testament, which is broken off incomplete, in the history of Jesus, upon the most beautiful key-stone. In their representation has been set in the clearest light, the difference between the doctrine of Christ and that of the scribes; they have shown the worship of the latter in all its nothingness, and have described the new religion as the worship of God in spirit and in truth. It becomes us to feel the greatest gratitude towards God for the gift of these four gospels, of which two were written by apostles, Matthew and John, and two by companions and friends of the apostles, namely, Mark, a friend of Peter, and Luke, a friend of Paul. As they all substantially agree, illustrate, and complete one another, so thereby Holy Scripture receives a higher ground of credibility. Several such gospels indeed were in circulation; but as they had neither been composed by apostles, nor their disciples, so they contained many disfigurements of divine truth, and untruths, and were on these grounds very properly not acknowledged of the Christian churches as ecclesiastical books. These have all been lost, with the exception of some few sections.

The history concerning the origin of the churches, or the Acts of the Apostles, not only teaches us respecting a period of time and concerning matters of extreme importance, but it contributes also, in an extraordinary manner, to the illustration of the Epistles of the New Testament.

THE THREE FIRST GOSPELS.

With all the peculiarities and differences which these gospels have, a remarkable state of agreement is found amongst them. Whilst John has assured us, John xxi. 25, Jesus had done so many things, that the world itself could not contain the books which might have been written; whilst he himself in his gospel hath selected chiefly such sayings and doings, as the three first Evangelists had omitted; so these manifest in by far the greatest number of particulars a remarkable agreement. They have narrated in common, the observances at the baptism of Jesus, his actions in Galilee, his preparation in order to his suffering, the last Week in Jerusalem, his Death and his Resurrection. Whilst in John the DIVINE-human in the person of Jesus is more apparent, on the contrary the DIVINE-human is what is brought to view in the first three Evangelists; yet in them Jesus does not appear merely as the Messiah, as the less enlightened Jews represented him, but as the person in whom the revelation of God received a full completion. And though the form of the remarkable national power in which the Eternal appeared, yet he is still represented as the Saviour of the world, as the person who had come through the power of the Spirit to satisfy the wants of the heart and the spirit. In this way the three Evangelists, and John, mutually supply each other, and give a painting of the God-man in his two relations, a vivid portrait of the riches and divine fulness which manifested themselves in him. So that we, in order to the full knowledge of Christ, can want neither of these. The three

first gospels have forty-two sections in common. Matthew and Mark 12, Mark and Luke 5, Matthew and Luke 14. Matthew has peculiar to himself 13, Mark only 2, Luke 9; but in each of these the disparity is very great. But as to the paragraphs which are common to these writers, the narrative in these is not only for the most part alike, but the sections are mostly in the same order, particularly in Mark and Luke, who vary but twice from each other; but, contrary to this order, Matthew in the first half of his gospel has stated certain particulars somewhat differently. In the mean time, we need be surprised neither at this strict agreement, nor at the deviations. It was natural, that soon after the ascension of Jesus a collection of narratives should be made concerning his life, to which the eye-witnesses lent their contributions. Of themselves they gave the two principal points; the baptism and ascension of Christ, and, with the design to prove Jesus as the Messiah come, there was also given in some measure a selection of his sayings and actions. Whether there was before our gospels a historical compilation, who can assert or deny? but suppose there was such a document, it could not have been considered as a finished and authoritative composition. In the early age of Christianity, the chief stress was laid upon oral communication, and to the apostles, the witnesses of the life of Christ, such written documents were least of all necessary. But when the wants of remote churches, or the instruction of catechumens, or reference to false teachers made such writings necessary, the common source imparted to them a manifest similarity. Yet the variations in the three first gospels should give us less perplexity, great as the weight which has been laid upon them, especially in modern times. In ancient times men found in this much rather a ground for the credibility of the gospels. They reasoned thus—had our evangelists been conscious of falsifying the truth, they would certainly have taken all pains to conceal this from the eye of

the world; they would uniformly have confirmed and defended each other. But now, as they were conscious to themselves of the utmost truth, and wrote from fundamental conviction, they placed their words not so exactly according to rule; they by no means avoided small deviations from each other, in particular secondary circumstances; they did not strictly avoid the appearance of contradiction, as they were conscious of a good cause and its undoubted truth. But that even the ancient church had not found any cause of doubt, in these variations, appears from the fact, that they acknowledged the whole of the four gospels as canonical. A multitude of objections against these, of clamours, of scoffs, of complaints, in which sometimes little, sometimes much is said, fall away; when we are able to lay aside our ideas of time which are partial, and to transport ourselves into the nation, the time, the morals, and customs and literature under the influence of which the evangelists wrote. Sometimes more from curiosity than an endeavour after edification, we wish that they had written down more than they have; but their design was accomplished when they had shown Jesus as the Messiah, and the features of his kingdom. Sometimes a light reading public desire *a piquant* delineation; but the elevated things which they had to announce lay in the subject itself, and would only have been lost by the ornamenting of human rhetoric. Another, as if he were appointed judge, wishes to understand the evangelists as having made their gospels according to a protocol, to weigh their expressions against each other, and where the least discrepancy appears, with pleasant countenance pronounces the sentence incredibility; but the evangelists did not write with such design; whoever would not believe them might have taken the simplest resource, and have gone to Jerusalem, where, among friends and enemies, sufficient eye-witnesses were still living.

Whosoever is not satisfied with the foregoing ob-

servations, may ponder the following profound remarks from Herder. "The differences of the evangelists," says he, "are so natural, that when we once only abandon entirely the strange thought that one evangelist designed to supply, abridge, or improve the other; and, on the contrary, consider each in a separate light, look upon each as if he were alone, and carry ourselves back as it were to the period of primitive Christianity, all orders itself through itself. Matthew and John stand as apostles and eye-witnesses for themselves; Mark and Luke are Evangelists,—by these words all is explained. A law has been described, a joyful message has been proclaimed. Thus apostles and evangelists preached. The evangelists were assistants and representatives of the apostles. They accompanied them on their journeys, continued their instructions, explained their discourses fully, and, as history was the foundation of the apostles' sermons, so they narrated it at large; Acts viii. 5—13. 2 Cor. viii. 18. 2 Tim. ii. 5. 1 Cor. ix. 23. The evangelists were thus a particular class of teachers, who stood next in order after the apostles and prophets; their office in particular was to narrate the doctrine and history of Jesus in a way adapted to the capacity of every one, Eph. iv. 11. Out of the mouths of the apostles, whom for that reason they accompanied many years, had they received their gift; they imparted it as an oral gospel to others. Trust (*i. e.* oral tradition) was at this period every thing; to it Paul himself appeals in his Epistles, as also the oldest teachers of Christianity,—in this respect Luke was not different from others. He appeals in the beginning of his gospel, not to writings which he had received in writing, but to accounts which he had received orally from eye-witnesses, apostles, and ministers of the word. Certainly these oral evangelists must have obtained a circle within which their narrative was reckoned valid, and this was the same which the apostles had had from the commencement of their preaching onwards. This is very plain from

Acts i. 21—22; ii. 23—26; x. 36—43. In our three gospels we meet with the same events, miracles, histories, and sayings, from whence we learn that the general tradition held especially in these narratives. Frequently they were narrated in the very same words; for this is the nature of the case in a narrative which is oral, especially an apostolic one, it is often and again repeated. But this sameness has never gone so far, that one evangelist would appear to be a copier of the other, as our three evangelists indicate. There is no event, no miracle, almost no word, and no history which each evangelist has not related after his own peculiar way, a diversity and freedom of statement which extends from the most trivial matters to the most important formulas. One sees plainly that each evangelist wrote independently of the other. Every one, even the concise Mark, has narrated circumstances peculiar to himself, particular discourses and miracles. John has a manner altogether peculiar; and when Paul brings his gospel to his recollection, he thinks of phenomena of which no other sacred writer had made mention, 1 Cor. xv. 1—7. Thus there lay upon the neck of none of them the yoke of exclusively learned or prescribed words, as the yoke is imposed on the neck of a slave. We know how freely the evangelists and apostles quoted the prophets; we know when this history was once written, how freely passages were quoted out of it by the fathers of the church; indeed, the very same writer has narrated the same history in the same book with different circumstances, Acts ix. 3; xxii. 6; xxvi. 13. All this belongs to living communication and instruction; in every line of every evangelist breathes this free spirit of communication; the spirit is not the letter. Hereby the differences of our evangelists explain themselves not only as necessary, but with them the genius of each writer appears in such a manner in the light, as if it were the only thing worthy of notice.”

If by the foregoing observations many things are

explained to us, and set in a clear light, which might perhaps seem strange to such readers as judge of our gospels in the light of the writings of other ancient nations, or according to the literature of our day, it cannot be considered hard to prove the full truth of their narratives. Not to mention, that nothing was farther from their intention than an artificial representation, designed to mislead the reader, whereas they contain much rather only the simplest narration. their credibility to us rests chiefly on the name of their authors. For when it is once ascertained that Matthew, the disciple of the Lord, that Mark and Luke, the friends, and for many years the helpers of the apostles Peter and Paul, are the authors of our three first gospels, all men to whom there could not have been wanting either the power or will to report the truth; there remains to us almost nothing more to be wished for in order to our full conviction. All depends therefore on the question,—did our gospels actually originate with their reputed authors? But this question has been answered so decidedly by the uniform testimony of the old church, that we may well maintain, no ancient book is so well ascertained on the ground of authorship as our gospels are. No one can deny that the first Christian churches had perfectly sufficient means of ascertaining the origin of these books. Christians were still living who had known the authors themselves, or had learned from their own mouth that they were the authors of these writings; besides, there were places where were shown the identical autographs. As little can it be asserted that the primitive church acknowledged these books, in a spirit of credulity and superficiality, else they would not have excluded from the collection of their sacred writings, as unapostolic, so many other writings which were then in circulation. Also there were teachers of error who appeared early, and who would not have neglected to make strong objections to the church on this very ground. Indeed many of them refused the credibility of our gospels,

not from any doubt of their origination from their reputed authors, but because, in their perverted party zeal, they denied their capability of a pure apprehension of Christianity. Even the persons, who in the face of the witness of antiquity, deny the composition of our gospels by their reputed authors, are forced to admit that they could not have been composed very long after the Ascension of Christ. To this they are compelled, not only by the uniform dissimilarity of these writings from those Christian compositions which appeared in the first centuries of the Christian æra, but from their own arrangement. Luke appeals to eye-witnesses from whom he received the subjects of his recitals; he had also written his gospel before the Acts of the Apostles, as we learn from the beginning of the latter. And since it can be dated only somewhere about the year sixty-two after the birth of Christ, certainly not later, the gospel must have been written about the same time, or still earlier, and therefore it cannot be dated later than the twenty-eight or thirtieth year after the Ascension. Much about the same strength of evidence which is for the gospel of Luke, may be derived for the other two, from the circumstance, that throughout they are silent on the subject of the Jewish wars, and the destruction of Jerusalem, as things that had already taken place. Had these facts taken place, they would surely have referred to them as the most complete confirmation of the prophecy of Jesus which they had put on record. When we have come to the conviction that the composition of our gospels was of so early a date, it follows that their credibility is raised above all suspicion. For how could false reports have found credit, or have been originated at a time the greater number of the apostles, and many eye-witnesses, were still living. Notwithstanding this, it has been even asserted, that a period of thirty years is sufficient wholly to disfigure the truth. And, in proof of this, reference has been made to the Greek historian Herodotus, who, thirty years after the

second Persian war, arranged a narrative thereof, and received a great number of fictions. We cannot but decline to compare our Evangelists with Herodotus, for here stand four against one; also, Herodotus lived about 500 years before the time of Christ, and at a time when history had advanced little. And the greatest number of his narratives he collected in his travels from the mouths of the people. But the stricter consideration of the Greek historian leads to a directly opposite conclusion. For, though he has drawn many wonderful sayings from earlier times, yet, in the time mentioned, he stands upon pure historical ground; and there introduces so few and so easily explicable fictions, that we see, first by his example, how a longer period than thirty years is required before simple facts can become enveloped with the garb of fable.

When ancient authors, who have not dwelt upon a close sifting of the materials of past history, narrate to us wonderful and strange occurrences in countries from which they dwelt at a distance, or in periods which have preceded them by centuries, we know right well how we are to deal with the matter, and find it very conceivable that popular sayings, handed down through hundreds of narrators, through the succession of which the report terminated in the historiographer, should have become gradually enlarged and formed anew into the marvellous. But wholly different is the case of the evangelical history.

The hero of it appeared in a purely historical sober time, and in a land which, by means of the sea, borders on all other lands; and, besides, as a province of the great Roman empire, standing in the most intimate connection with all the nations known at that period. He lays great stress, purposely, upon this,—of living and acting publicly throughout; he was commonly seen where multitudes of people were accustomed to meet at the festivals, festival caravansaries, on the great roads where the people travelled to Jerusalem, in free public places. In re-

peated journeys he travelled through the whole land, he turned sometimes here sometimes there,—longer or shorter;—he did not shun intercourse with his enemies. One sees him in conversation with them, and even at their meals: he chooses twelve disciples, whom he particularly called, that by attending strictly to his life and doctrine, they might be prepared to bear witness to them:—three of these he takes into solitude with him, that all might know there was nothing with him concealed; seventy others hold depute commissions, and were to prepare the way, at particular places, for his advent. In fine, he ends his course at Jerusalem, in view of the whole people assembled at the passover, after that he had been tried openly before all the high authorities of the land,—before the High Priests, before the Sanhedrim, before the Roman governor. Truly, it is impossible that such a life should have been disfigured by traditions, even to such a degree as to be undistinguishable at the end of twenty or thirty years, and the first Christian church, that church which took pains, through the medium of the oral gospels, to keep pure the history of Jesus, would be guilty, not only of an unpardonable, but of a truly inconceivable frivolousness, if it could be charged with ever so undesigned a falsification of the history of Jesus.

Nevertheless, the foregoing enlargement is superfluous, because we can prove, undeniably, in a shorter way, that,—not evangelists, but an apostle,—not from twenty or thirty years after, but in the half of the time, had narrated the most important facts in the life of Jesus, just as we find them recorded in our Gospels. In all his epistles, even the earliest, Paul taught, in the most decisive manner, the resurrection of Jesus, partly with such additions as that the evangelical history has been completed thereby.

But even this same apostle has also taught the supernatural birth of Jesus, Gal. iv. 4. 1 Tim. iii. 16, and his ascension, Eph. iv. 8—10. But when once these must be acknowledged as facts sufficiently

attested, so it is, in fact, no more worth while to contend, more or less, concerning a miracle during the life of Jesus. This ground gains so much the more in consequence, as no one will, indeed, assume that the conviction of Paul, respecting the historical circumstances of Jesus, received gradual addition in the course of time; but it appears to us rather according to the manner in which it manifests itself, in all his epistles, and according to the circumstances which caused and accompanied his conversion, as a conviction produced, as it were, at a gush. But now, this conversion took place in the earliest period of Christianity, and this leads us to presuppose, even then, the entire connection of the narratives which were set forth at a later period in the written Gospels also.

Altogether, the history of Jesus carries the evidence of its own truth in itself. A character such as his, and a life like his, could not have been painted by the most highly gifted, much less could it have been formed out of scattered sayings. All the men of distinguished virtue, in the adorning of whom with all conceivable accomplishments, poets and romance writers have exerted themselves, bear too obviously the stamp of their own age, and of the sentiments which then prevailed, whilst Jesus, elevated above all, stands as a peerless model for all ages. Even the wise man, as the Stoic philosophers imagined him, furnished with all perfection in the highest degree, whose broken and weak rays they had perceived in the most celebrated of their sect, how poor he stands even in their artificial representations beside Jesus; and yet they ventured not to assert that such a character had at any time appeared, or would be manifested on earth, contented to unite all conceivable perfections in an ideal character, which had a reality only in their conceptions. Moreover, when we consider our gospels, they are not distinguished by attempts after eloquence and poetical flights, and we have to thank Jesus and Providence that men were

not chosen to bear witness, who would rather have exhibited a beautiful fiction than historical truth. The Jesus whom our Evangelists describe, stands too high over them, over his own time, and all times, too high above mankind, at that period, and all succeeding generations, to warrant us in assuming that they could have drawn such a portrait of themselves, or out of their age. Yea, we can go still farther. The whole condition of the world to our time, and the course of the world's history itself, for eighteen hundred years, gives a guarantee that the principal facts in the life of Jesus, as narrated in our Gospels, must have been real. The Christian religion once existed, and must on this very account, because it did once exist, have a foundation, and that too, a satisfactory one. But such a foundation is wanting, if it be assumed that the life of Jesus is described as an ordinary human life, and that the most distinguished parts of it were only the furniture of a later tradition. How was it possible that some fishermen and tax-gatherers out of Galilee, the most uncultivated district of Judea, could bring a new religion to the world, particularly after they found themselves precipitated from the height of their expectation by the unexpected death of their master, at the time to them inexplicable, in the greatest spiritual confusion, and in such dejection of mind as can hardly be described. How could the faith which they preached have prevailed against the earlier religions, which commended themselves by their high antiquity, their obsequiousness to the passions of men, and their connection with the arts, the laws of states, and, besides, a perverted human wisdom. All this is easily explained if our Gospels relate truth; for then over the strong has come a still stronger. But whosoever rejects the truth of our Gospels, lays on himself the task to explain these facts in some other manner. But this is not possible. Christianity, as it is now, and as it was from the commencement, presupposes just such an origin as is described in our Gospels. One must

assume such a number of propitious chances, and what is then a chance?—we assume of caprices of fortune, of frauds, and withal coincident favourable circumstances, but in these would be found substantially still greater miracles than even in the history of Jesus.

But what, then, would become of the history? It is not to be feared that the example of the Mahomedan religion can be adduced as an objection to the foregoing reasonings. To say nothing of the fact in this religion, that a power certainly developed itself, but one not divine; on the contrary, of a gross nature; that it was diffused partly by the force of arms, partly through the corruption of sensuality; that it contains also many truths borrowed out of the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Even the advocates of this religion never boast of the miracles of its founder; they only recognize in him a prophet whose only miracle is his doctrine. But had Christianity not possessed full truth, and internal living power, how could it uniformly have stood forth victoriously during three centuries of persecution, and against the bitter foes which it had, in the lusts and pride of the natural man?

How can we derive all the blessings which Christianity has already produced, in softening the manners, in suppressing the more pernicious and barbarous customs, in care for the poor and destitute sick; in the consecration of domestic life, and in founding domestic happiness, in establishing institutions for the instruction of the young? How can all this be derived from a mere concourse of tales? Whoever looks back upon the foregoing, and considers the gradual development of the great plan of God from Abraham onward, how can he fail to find in all an inward necessary connection, which is more convincing than all other evidence, because it leads into the interior of things, gives testimony to the credibility of the Gospel history? How could one censure as untruths the inward experiences which hi-

therto so many devout Christians have felt through their sincere faith in Christ?

In confirmation of the foregoing, we adduce an excellent passage from a work of the, alas! early bea-
tified Vokshammer. "It may justly be inquired if at any time any other history of ancient times hath been attested to by stronger and more numerous documents than the life of Jesus, in respect to its chief points? The early indelible faith in him, the origin and uninterrupted continuance of Christianity, the existence of the Church, in which, as well as in its institutions, customs, and feasts, the founder continues, as it were, immortal, in the grand features of his life; all this testifies loudly enough that Jesus is not a fabulous, but a real historical person. None of the most celebrated heroes of antiquity, none of those called kings, lawgivers, no other person whatever, has imprinted on the world such indelible marks of his existence and spirit, as the author of Christianity, in the altered modes of thought, in the spirit of the times, in the manners and religious life of the better people; for the last eighteen hundred years his history has been verified in the most lively manner; a proof which would have had still worth and excellency though the written documents of the Gospels had never existed. But even these writings whose high antiquity is historically certain, and for whose genuineness external and internal proofs testify, are not less important highly credible witnesses to the life and actions of Jesus. From just such a life as that delineated by them, may be explained, in the most natural manner, the very ancient but still continuing historical facts which we have already named, as therefore these writings serve to make Christianity intelligible, and to show its high origin; so, on the contrary, the existence and the demonstrable high antiquity of Christianity, give a highly important testimony for the credibility of the evangelical documents. To maintain that the Gospels contain in the main not facts, but fictions, would be internally baseless, and

in every respect far more improbable than the miracles narrated in the Gospels. Unless we presuppose the Gospel history, not only the form of the Church, but the whole forming of the later world must vanish, as it were, into air; *i. e.* without a cause or sufficient foundation, also appear inexplicable; whilst, on the other hand, it is just this history which contains the solution of the mystery.

What would be gained if human scepticism could ever succeed to undermine the credibility of the Gospels? Truly, if this history, divested of its extraordinary character, be sunk down into the flatness of every day life, then must sink with it all the elevated views of the dignity of humanity in its fellowship with God, all the hopes of a better futurity, all the powerful and exciting means to sanctification; and to the miserable creature who, from the height of his speculation has cast down all these, what equivalent remains?"

Perhaps the foregoing remarks have convinced the reader that the good cause of the Gospel stands firm and unshaken in the face of all opposition. Perhaps, also, the wish has arisen within him, there may be evidence plainer, simpler, and more powerful than those advanced, to prevent all possibility of doubt. Though the wish is natural, the foundation from which it has arisen is partial. At no step of its development has divine revelation been such as that it has compelled men to believe. What would faith be, if its object could be shown to the senses, or proved by necessary demonstration as a question of arithmetic, or decided as a process before the civil judge? The person of Jesus himself, to which we ascribe still greater impression than to his words, exerted no compulsion upon his countrymen. Many who saw him, and perhaps experienced his beneficence, remained notwithstanding in unbelief. Many might have rejected him on account of his outward human form, his being weary, the scoffs at him, and the stains of his garments; but the susceptible

mind saw through these outward things, his inward greatness, and believed. So all depends upon the heart we bring with us to the reading of the Bible. The unbeliever finds in it a preponderance of matter whereby to confirm his unbelief, and the scoffer much to satisfy his appetite for mocking. In no book does the saying hold with greater propriety

Reader, how please I thee ?

Reader, how pleasest thou me ?

Whilst we think that we judge of the Holy Scripture we are rather judged ourselves, for, as is our judgment of it, so is also our inner man. Do we only bring with us a devout heart, seeking edification, then will the truth of the Gospel approve itself to us with surpassing power.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW, IN PARTICULAR.

Of Matthew we know nothing more than what he has narrated, ix. 9. That he was a publican at the Sea of Galilee, and was called of Jesus from the receipt of custom. He followed on the call without tarrying. The ancient fathers have mentioned many things concerning his later fortunes, and death, but these are not sufficiently attested. His Gospel is said to have been written in Aramaic, the language of the country, as it was designed for the Jews, and in the eighth year after the ascension of Christ ; according to others, in the twelfth, or yet later.

Whilst he has many things in common with the others, at the same time his writing has certain peculiar features. He wrote with the view of giving the Jewish Christians a still deeper impression, and of bringing the yet unbelieving Jews to faith in Jesus. On this account he has traced backwards the genealogy of Jesus only in the line of David and Abraham. For the same reason the work abounds with references to the Old Testament, i. 22 ; ii. 6, 15, 18 ; iii. 3—16 ; iv. 14 ; viii. 17 ; xii. 18 ; xiii. 35 ; xxvii. 9.

On this account, also, he has explained many Jew-

ish usages which were known to his readers, different from the manner, in this respect, of the other evangelists. Whilst the two other evangelists have recorded more the occurrences and facts in the life of Jesus than of his sayings, Matthew has given the latter numerous and copiously, as chap. v.—vii. x. xiii. xxiii. xxiv—25. Whilst Mark and Luke have narrated the secondary circumstances and occurrences more copiously and clearly, Matthew, on the other hand, has given these in substance concisely, and in detailed portions. In the historical narratives he has given only as much as barely sufficed to make the matter intelligible. His peculiar province seems to have been to give a clear and correct view of the numerous sayings which Jesus was reported to have uttered; but even in these there is displayed a depth, a clearness, a fulness peculiar to himself, and which is worthy of one who was an eye-witness and an apostle of Jesus. His whole narrative is concentrated in painting the personality of Jesus, like a picture in which the whole of the light is collected together upon one figure, whilst other objects are illuminated only as rays from the grand light. In view of his Lord, every thing else is only secondary to him; what Christ did, what Christ said, seemed to him worthy to be set forth in a prominent point of view. Seized with his mighty theme, he has placed before our eyes the plain person and inner being of the Saviour, and his work, with a clearness which has given a deep impression of the divinity of our Lord, and he has pressed into short compass, as it were, the view of our Saviour, which in a more general manner would have lost the tendency to impress. So far as the delineations of the Saviour are principally set forth by the long discourses that are given, our Gospel has an affinity to that of John. Matthew has this peculiarity, that whilst he has set forth the general points of history, he has arranged them according to his subject matter, and placed together similar matters, and supplementary to each other;

although, therefore, in general he has preserved the order of time, it cannot surprise us, whilst here and there, as particularly at chap. iv. xii.—xiii. he has made a remarkable arrangement of matter, which has eminently served to place the object before the reader in all its aspects. The whole of this Gospel naturally divides itself into the following sections:—

I. The history of things which took place before the entrance of Jesus on public life, i.—iv. 11.

1.) The Infancy of Jesus, i.—ii.

2.) John the Baptist, iii.

3.) The Temptation, iv. 1—11.

II. The public life of Jesus to the period of his sufferings, iv. 2 ; xviii. 35.

1.) Description of Jesus as a teacher, iv. 12 ; 7. 29.

2.) As a worker of miracles, viii. 1—9, 35.

3.) Seasonable care of Jesus for founding his kingdom, by the instruction of his apostles, x. 1.—11. 1.

4.) Relation of Jesus to John, to the people, to the Pharisees, xi. 2 ; xii. 50.

5.) Instruction as to the nature of his kingdom, xiii. 1—58.

6.) Doings and sayings of Jesus on his different travels, xiv. 1 ; xviii. 35.

III. History of the last journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, of his passion and death ; his resurrection and final departure, xix. 1 ; xxviii. 20.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK, IN PARTICULAR.

Mark, according to his full name John Mark, was a native of Jerusalem. It was in the house of his mother, Mary, the apostles were assembled, Acts xii. 12. Then, probably, he was only a youth. The opinion that he was one of the seventy disciples has nothing in its favour. Afterwards, through his relation to Barnabas, Coloss. iv. 10, he obtained the acquaintance of the apostle Paul, and he accompa-

nied the two for a long time in their missionary travels. His youth had disposed him to some measure of fickleness, so that he soon departed from them again, Acts xiii. 13. Paul was vexed at this, and was unwilling to take him with him again, Acts xv. 38, whereon there arose a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas. It is probable on this occasion Mark connected himself with Peter, for he has mentioned him with praise, 1 Peter v. 13; but Paul also became altered in his sentiments towards him, and permitted him to come to him, when he was subject to imprisonment at Rome, 2 Tim. iv. 11; Coloss. iv. 11. The early fathers have reported that Mark mostly continued with Peter, that the Church had entreated him to put into writing the life of Jesus, which, as an evangelist, he had delivered frequently by word of mouth; and that, whilst he complied with this wish, Peter at the same time sanctioned the undertaking. By this tradition we can explain two circumstances, namely, the general circulation this gospel had, and the peculiarity of structure which distinguishes many portions of it. Only on the supposition that an apostle, and one so distinguished as Peter, had approved of this writing, can we explain that it found so speedy an acceptance in all the Churches. The place, also, where it was composed, may have contributed somewhat to this.

Now, it might have been Alexandria, or Rome, report wavers between the two, yet with some leaning to the latter place. Accordingly, the extended relations in which this city stood, as the seat of government, of commerce, of science and art, could easily have made this book, together with the commands of Cæsar, with merchandise, and literary treasures, extend itself on all hands, as a document from the King of heaven, as the most precious merchandise, as imparting instruction in the highest of the sciences. But the condition of the book also no less clearly explains itself. More than in any other of the

Gospels, there prevails in this the tone of one who narrates; it resembles the narrative of one who had resounded it in living words, but who comprehended it again, and committed it to writing in a precise style. Hence arises the copious minuteness in the description of particular circumstances, the picturesque perception, as it had been orally expressed by the narrator; hence the omission of the longer discourses, the abbreviation of figures, and the termination of each narrative with an emphatic word or a repetition; hence the omission of the infancy of Jesus, and the beginning with the baptism, which, in the oral gospels, was made the commencing point of his history; on this account the frequently repeated expressions that were entirely suited to oral communications,—AND, and SOON. From the great intimacy of Mark and Peter explains itself also, that he has narrated many things more copiously which relate to the latter. He expresses himself solemnly in words which had been spoken in the Aramaic tongue at v. 41; vii. 34; xiv. 36; occasionally he gives explanations for the sake of the unlearned reader, vii. 2, 4, and 8. According to the testimony of the early fathers, Mark wrote this gospel for the Christians who had been converted from paganism.

It divides naturally into the following portions:—

I. The commencement of the Gospel, i. 1—13.

II. The Gospel itself.

- 1.) The actions of Jesus in Galilee, i. 14; ix. 50.
- 2.) In Judæa.
 - a) On his journey to Jerusalem, x.
 - b) At Jerusalem itself, xi. 13.
 - c) The sufferings, death, and burial of Jesus, xiv. xv.
 - d) The resurrection and ascension, xvi.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE, IN PARTICULAR.

Luke is perhaps Lucius, a native of Cyrene, Acts xiii. 1, the kinsman of Paul, Romans xvi. 21. On

the other hand, others have thought he was of Antioch. Paul designates him physician, Col. iv. 14; and remarks that even in this particular he was his true friend; accordingly he has praised him as the only one who had not forsaken him in his captivity. 2 Tim. iv. 11. From a comparison of two passages, Colóss. iv. 11 and 14, there appears some ground for the opinion that he was born a Gentile. And in the Acts of the Apostles, which is his work, he is uniformly designated as the companion of Paul, Acts xvi. 11.

Luke, indeed, wrote his Gospel in the first instance for a man, a certain Theophilus, who was, without doubt, a Roman of high rank, i. 3; yet beyond question he had in view also thereby to impart knowledge to others, and to readers who were not of Palestine. From the foregoing, the reader will be prepared for understanding the substance and distinguishing qualities of the Gospel of Luke. So far as he had less to do with writing out an oral report, than with a substantial account for examination and reflection, so his book has a historical character, by which it is distinguished from Mark's Gospel. Born a Gentile, an assistant of Paul the great apostle of the Gentiles on many missionary travels among the heathen, one does not know whether he wrote it for the converted, or the yet to be converted among the Gentiles; that gospel takes a more general direction, in opposition to that of Matthew; and Jesus appears in this Gospel, in particular, as having become the Saviour for the heathen.

Under these two particulars we are able to arrange all the peculiarities of the Gospel by Luke. It belongs to its historical character that he introduced his book by a preface, in which he has set down the sources which he used; that he goes beyond the compass of the oral gospels, and narrates matters from the beginning, iii. 1, he has given a date without which we would have been wholly in the dark as to the time when our Saviour entered upon office; and that he has neither heaped together masses

of narratives nor of doctrines, but placed all in good order, and distinctly; by a sketch he prepares the causes, by a remark he unfolds a digression, and ends in a beautiful harmony. On the contrary, its more general direction is manifest, in his having carried backward the family register of Christ to Adam, in his having omitted all such matters as were for Jews only; in the narrative concerning the seventy disciples as the representatives of all people; and, finally, by his many narratives and parables peculiar to himself, in which he has painted the character of Christ as full of the most benevolent sympathy and generous love. He has observed, chap. i. 1—3, that even in his time many writings concerning the life of Jesus had been in circulation, and that he now had searched all things from the beginning. This probably took place in the years 57 and 58, when Luke was with Paul at Cæsarea, when he had sufficient time and opportunity to inquire into all matters. On this account the tradition is very probable that Paul himself had some share in the composition of this gospel.

This gospel may be divided in the following manner:—

I. The infancy of Jesus, i.—ii. and matters preparatory to entering on his office, iii.—iv. 13.

II. Employment of Jesus.

1.) Discourses and actions of Jesus in Galilee, iv. 14—ix. 50.

2.) Discourses and actions on his journey to Jerusalem, ix. 51—xix. 28.

3.) Discourses and actions of Jesus at Jerusalem, xix. 29—xxiv. 53.

The section concerning the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem is peculiar to Luke; nevertheless, even in this we come upon many things scattered here and there, which we find also by the other evangelists.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

John, as James the Elder, was a son of Zebedee;

his birth-place was Bethsaida. His mother, whose name was Salome, often accompanied Jesus, and was one of the friends who attended at his crucifixion. It is very probable that this pious woman had early produced a religious impression on the susceptible minds of her sons. The father and sons followed the trade of fishermen, in the sea of Gennesareth, Luke v. 10. Probably John is the other unnamed disciple, who, according to John i. 35, being early instructed by the Baptist, in company with Andrew, immediately followed Jesus, when he had learned to know him. According to all accounts concerning him, he was the youngest of the apostles. Jesus gave him and his brother the name Sons of Thunder, Luke ix. 49, 56, on account of their ardent disposition. They were, together with Peter, in the particular confidence of our Lord, and were taken along with him when the others were left behind, Luke viii. 51; Matth. xvii. 1; Luke xxiii. 37. Amidst the disciples John was the principal favourite of our Lord. In reference to this, in his Gospel he calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved, xiii. 23; xix. 26; xx. 2. Jesus, when expiring, recommended to him her who was his mother according to the flesh, John xix. 26. He was among the last at the cross of Jesus, xix. 33—37; and after the resurrection he was the first at the grave. Afterwards he associated particularly with Peter, with him he was imprisoned and released again,—he is designated a pillar in the Christian Church, Gal. ii. 9. He remained at Jerusalem to the death of Mary, which took place about the fifteenth year after the ascension. Soon after, probably, he went to Asia Minor, and occupied himself with the formation and ordering of the Seven Churches, which are mentioned in the Book of Revelation, until he took up his permanent abode at Ephesus. At this time took place the persecution of the Christians, under Nero, when John was banished to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the Revelation. All accounts agree that he died an easy and natural death, at a very advanced age, and long after the destruction of

Jerusalem. His Gospel is said to have been composed in his old age.

The Gospel of John has always been looked upon in a peculiar light by all sentimental Christians; and accordingly the fathers have rightly given the distinction between it and the other Gospels; in these is described more of the outward and visible, in the latter more of the inward and spiritual life of Jesus. On the same grounds, moderns have called this book of the New Testament *The Heart of Jesus*. It has obtained also the very first place among the sacred books, as well on account of the many discourses of Jesus which it contains, as from the great importance of its contents. Whereas the other evangelists insist mainly only upon the actions of Jesus, and discourses which relate to the object of his life; he has confirmed the sense of the divine laws in opposition to the perverted glosses of the Pharisees,—he exhorts to piety, and warns against vice. John also has given particularly the sayings of Jesus in the company of his most intimate friends, and in the last hours of his life, in which he speaks especially of his divine mission and dignity. And how charming is the language of John; he has somewhat altogether peculiar, a special sweetness and elevation not at all affected, but the true flowing out of his pure and childlike spirit embued by the Holy Spirit. There is also found, with all this simplicity and copiousness, such a depth and fulness, that whilst on the main point we have plainness, in matters of secondary consideration there remain no little darkness; and in order to seeing through which deep reflection is necessary. In no other book is the saying of the ancients so much confirmed as in this, that the holy Scripture resembles a water, through which a lamb could wade, and an elephant swim.

The design he had in view, by the composition of this gospel, John gives us to know by his words, John xx. 31: “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God.”

He did not design to write a particular history of the life of Jesus; would we suppose this was his object, then his book was extremely imperfect, since it frequently contains nothing but a few sayings of Jesus, in one whole year of his public life; he has passed over all the rest, and given a full account only of the last months of Jesus;—his object was rather, out of the history itself, to furnish proof that Jesus is really the Christ, *i. e.* possessed of divine dignity. For that reason he selected from the life of Jesus particular facts and sayings which bear upon this great truth. For that reason he opened his book with the elevated introduction concerning the word of God—for that reason he turns again and again to this principal design, as at John iii. 16; v. 18. and 23; vi. 26; vii. 29; xvii. 5. Against Jews and Gentiles, against all who thought lowly concerning Christ, this book proves his divinity, and, indeed, in the only possible way, by a particular testimony from him. It is true the first Evangelists also had entirely the same design before them which John had, and they reached it in a way which was fully sufficient for the circle of readers for which they were designed. But when Christianity had already found access far and wide; when it had made its way among Jews and Gentiles, among men of the people, and also men of high scientific cultivation. As the Christian faith: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God—found doubts only on the part of a few, but was received with much misconception and peculiar prejudices on the part of some; when the Gentile philosopher sought to unite the philosophy of the East with the simple doctrine of Christ, John felt it necessary, amid such darkness and misconception, not only to cause light and evidence to shine, but that the truth should be ascertained against every kind of misconception. John had particularly in his eye all such readers, as busied themselves with profound speculations on divine matters; and these the apostle endeavoured to bring to a deeper knowledge of divine things, also to

teach them to avoid every bye way which lay near the right path, and, on the other hand, he gave them to understand that in Christ lay all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. From the enlarged field of history which John presented, he had to omit wholly all that referred to Palestine and the Jews only. It was indeed the counsel of God, that salvation should come from the Jews; but it was no less a part of the same divine counsel, that in all time to come the offering up of pure worship should no longer be confined to the mountains Gerizzim and Moriah, John iv. 20. That Jesus, a son of David, was born at Bethlehem, had no direct importance, in relation to that circle of readers for whom he wrote; his Christ the Lord, who had come from heaven, did not need any of the splendour that flowed from ancestry: Thus he passed over a matter which might be found in the older gospels, when such was necessary to the confirmation of the faith of any one. Instead of the many and similar miracles which the older gospels had narrated, and cited as proofs of the Messiah's dignity, as John informs us that he wrote at a later period, and far from Palestine, he related only a few miracles, and in this he had less in view the evidence they implied, than the moral teaching that stood in connection with them—*e. g.* in the healing of the blind Jesus appears as the light of the world; the feeding of the multitude, in a miraculous manner, proves Jesus is the heavenly manna; the turning the water into wine is a symbol of the ennobling of the church through Christ; the resurrection of Lazarus made manifest that Christ is the life of men. John has not mentioned the institution of baptism and the Lord's supper; these matters were universally known, but he has carefully explained the nature and design of these holy ordinances, John iii. 3; vi. 32, 63. The task assigned him was to show that Jesus should be acknowledged as the Son of God, as the Light and the Life of men, as the Saviour of the world. To this point, therefore, the whole of his gospel is directed

from the beginning to the end. To set forth these matters, his narratives and sayings were carefully adapted, and that this was his object, the searching mind must immediately perceive on reading this book.

With these general objects John united also others of a particular nature. His wish was to supply certain matters which had been omitted by the three first Evangelists; as he avoided the repetition of many particulars which the other Evangelists had set forth. It would be quite erroneous to maintain that this book is a bare gleaning, for this evidently is impossible, John xxi. 25, and his work is not a collection of fragments, but consists of one gush. But in every particular our book has an extraordinary value, do we only consider it a book of history. John understands the way often by a few words, to let us have a profound look into the innermost soul of the person treated of, through the insertion of events at an earlier period, and apparently unimportant, to prepare for the knowledge of events at a later period, and to explain them: in fine, he knew to narrate the more important events so plainly, that the reader feels as if he saw the matter before his own eyes. Herder has described admirably the peculiarities of John in this respect, "Should any one," says he, "undertake to represent a correct design of John's Gospel, a true portrait of the matured delineation, he might perhaps say the hand of an angel had given the delineation. The exalted conception in which he apprehends Christ from the bosom of the Father, and accompanies him downward as the benefactor of the human family in every age, until he at length shines forth visibly, full of grace and truth. With what graciousness he sets forth this beautiful truth apart from all attempts to embellish; he understood to describe minute shades, to elucidate; what unity of plan he unites with manifold variety of particular scenes; what clearness and simplicity of soul; how finely he characterizes, how carefully he combines and sepa-

rates? every scene has its proper place, each emotion expresses itself in its peculiar manner; even the doctrine is gradually developed in well selected measures, and gently divides. Even the repetitions of particular subjects are not vainly made. Thereby interest is awakened towards him who is the prominent subject to the end of the book. John designed to write an additional gospel, the history of spirit and truth; his style is destitute of decoration, an expression of his soul resembling itself, it is plain but abrupt, bold, and which scorns much the consideration of manner. This little book is a calm deep sea, in which thoughts suggest themselves with the remembrance of the beautiful time of youth in the life of John, as a pleasing shore, where heaven itself is reflected with its sun and stars.

In like manner there is impressed on this lovely book the whole character of its author, an ardour of soul which embraces the whole world, a heart alive to Christ, a deep feeling which finds its happiness only in the contemplation of God, a living view, a holy mildness and tender-heartedness, all these sentiments, are purified from natural dross and consecrated by spiritual union with him who had loved this disciple.

The supposition, also, that John had written to refute numerous followers, at that time, of John the Baptist, and to convince them of the divine dignity of Jesus, is not improbable. The testimony of John the Baptist concerning Christ, placed near the beginning, is significant of this object, though, when interpreted naturally, it must appear that this could not have been his only object. According to others, John here, in his Gospel, as in the Epistles, wrote in refutation of sects which had arisen in his time, namely, the Gnostics and Ebionites, the former of which questioned the true humanity, the latter the true deity of Christ, certainly it was in the nature of his object to expose perverted speculations, and to destroy the false wisdom of man; and he did this, not by setting forth the objections and grounds of op-

position, but whilst he set the truth before them in all its fairest and engaging aspect, by unfolding the truth, he subdued the error.

John did not divide his gospel after the manner of the other Evangelists, according to the places where Jesus lived and officiated, but according to the Jewish festivals Jesus had attended each year. We learn that Jesus travelled to four such festivals. The division of this gospel may be made nearly as follows :—

Introduction, chap. i. 1—28.

I. From the baptism until the journey to the feast of tabernacles, i. 28—vi. 71.

This period embraces two passovers at least, perhaps even three, (v. 1), and continued at least a year and a half, but perhaps two years and a half.

II. From that until the journey to the last passover, vii. 1—xi. 56. This section embraces only six months.

III. From this to the history of the passion, xii. 1—xvii. 26. A period only of six days.

IV. The history of the passion, xviii. 1—xix. 42.

V. The resurrection, and the appearance after the resurrection, xx. 1—xxi. 25.

The grounds which have been adduced for the credibility of the other gospels are, for the most part, valid for that of John ; yea, he has superior proof to what they have. The great age to which John had arrived, he is said to have died towards the end of the first century ; his ministry in so many eminent churches ; the wide circle of his acquaintance, and particularly with the oldest churches, some of which must have been formed by himself ; all these circumstances render it nearly impossible that John could be recognized as the author of the book so generally by the first churches, had it not really been composed by him. Besides, this book contains so plain references to the person of John as the author ;

but, if we doubt this, we must accuse some other with a wilful deception, but such a deception no one could have accomplished in a work of such excellence. The principal objection that has been made against our book is, that Jesus, in actions and sayings, appears a different person from what he does in the other gospels; but this objection completely falls away when are considered the design and manner of statement which John pursued.

The ancients have given to John the appellation—The Divine, because of his insisting on the deity of Christ.

These four evangelical narratives place before us the portrait of Jesus in his discourses and actions, his life and death. A feeling heart cannot read it without being made to feel inmost love, sympathy, admiration, confidence. He is so far removed from all the impulses which here and there, under the appearance of the beautiful and noble, yet indulge only a concealed passion, vanity, pride, selfishness; so far from wild fanaticism, which challenges the enemy, and throws itself fool-hardily into the danger, he unites in himself all the excellencies which the most celebrated of our race possess only in certain particulars, and in a lower degree; and he combines in his character what, in ordinary men, appears a contradiction, a firm heart with a tender soul,—deep sensibility with a clear understanding,—a gentle mild interior with immoveable power,—firm trust in God with unwearied activity,—a holy seriousness with natural serenity, which does not abstract itself morosely from the circles of social life,—an entire unlimited resignation to the will of his heavenly Father,—this is the prominent shade in his character. That God's will be done wholly, and in minute parts, and at every moment, this is his only concern. That God would be glorified in all things, this is the object of his life. Allegiance to his heavenly Father in actions

and afflictions, in sufferings and death; this is his meat. It is impossible to mention a failing to which Jesus was subject as a virtue he did not possess. He is the only man who knew no sin. In every situation of his active life, his demeanor is the noblest hatred to sin, yet pity for the sinner,—love to all men,—love to them who crucified him,—most feeling interest in all that concerned his friends,—unshaken resolution,—tenderness towards offenders, and a perfect resignation of himself to God,—these are his qualities, so far as we contemplate him as the Son of Man; but beneath this outward covering he took upon him that he might be wholly ours, and to purchase us to himself, lies concealed his divine dignity, and which was often maintained by him in his discourses, and witnessed to in his sayings; and which will, at a coming period, be openly declared before all unbelievers by the resurrection and the judgment. As his calm, sober, powerful efficacy, manifested by the statement of his divinely attested doctrine, by many miracles, by the accordance of his remarkable life with many early prophecies; in like manner his death, undertaken for the sin of the world, was a source of blessings. There is salvation in no other,—there is no other name given among men whereby we can be saved.

As the times of the Old Testament were preparatory for, and prophetic of Jesus, in like manner our times rest on him not only in respect of religion, but the institution of states, science, all the modes of thought and feeling as manifested in human life; on this account he has been named the centre of all history. The question has been put, why did not Jesus appear on earth at an earlier period? Whilst to our view, in a matter so deep, many things must remain dark, nevertheless we must see clearly that in the whole of the world's history there was no more suitable period which divine wisdom could have selected. Then Judaism appeared to every thinking person as unfit to bless, and the desire after the Messiah

had attained unto its highest pitch. The public religion among the heathen had lost all credit with the cultivated, and was become a subject of derision. By the spreading of the Jews everywhere, the doctrine of one God, though acknowledged only by a few, yet was made known generally. Philosophy, also, had completed a remarkable course of faith and unbelief; it awakened the desire after somewhat higher, and showed at the same time its inadequacy to satisfy this. About this time, upon the whole, tranquillity and peace prevailed all over the known world; the Romans ruled in those days, and beheld the spread of the new religion, though not with favour yet with indifference, so long as it brought no detriment on theirs. Then first their persecutions began, but they came too late to eradicate the deeply rooted tree. Most countries stood united together in bands of peace; journeys were free from danger, and one acquainted with the Greek tongue could make his way every where.

This was the wisely chosen time in which Jesus taught and did his wonderful works, and sent out his disciples to spread everywhere his word of life.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

At the beginning of this book is intimated that it is a continuation of the Gospel which was directed to Theophilus. The reference to Theophilus proves it is a work of Luke, and that he was the author all ancient documents testify. As it narrates matters relative to the kingdom of God as far as to the second year of Paul's captivity at Rome, which, according to the most exact calculation, accords with the sixty-first year after the birth of Christ, so it is likely to have been composed at this time.

As Luke improved his time at Cæsarea to the composition of his Gospel, in like manner he may have used the two years he spent with Paul prisoner at Rome, to the preparation of the Acts of the Apostles.

A book which describes the most momentous facts concerning the founding and establishing the kingdom of God among men, and its fortunes among men, was of the greatest importance for that early period; but for us, who without it would know scarcely any thing of that period, it has an unspeakable value. From it we learn how soon after the ascension the promise of Christ that he would give the Holy Spirit was fulfilled, in how wonderful a manner he blessed the labours of the apostles, and how the Church of God gradually passed over from the Jews to the Gentiles. From it we learn the erection of the first Christian Churches, their weakness often at first, and their tendency to improve, to know the faith completely purified from all Jewish and Pagan errors. In it we have the sure foundation for a history of the Christian Church. The circumstances of our times render this book particularly important and valuable. The time which it describes appears now to recommence, and the Lord sends now, as he did then, his life-giving word to the blind heathen through great multitudes of evangelists. How encouraging now the example of the first and greatest missionaries, the apostles; their patience, their devotedness to the cause, their unshaken faith, and the blessed consequences of their labours! How instructive their example in the different circumstances in which they were placed! How delightful the conviction that this is the way in which the Lord from the commencement hath spread abroad his Word, and will, we know, continue to spread it, Rom. x. 15.

Our book divides itself naturally into two portions, chap. i.—xii. and xiii.—xxviii. the former of these describes the founding and spreading of the Christian Church, through the agency of all the apostles, and in particular of Peter and John, but the latter narrates only the entire efficacy of the Apostle Paul on his different missionary travels. It begins with the account of the destitute apostles, and the nearest companions and friends of Jesus, and it ends in the

thirty-first year after the ascension, after that it has informed us of the establishment of Christianity in many remote lands and cities. No sooner had the first church at Jerusalem been confirmed on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, than gradually by this event multitudes of believers in near and remote circles were added to the kingdom of God. Externally Samaria had the first believers, viii. 1, after this the cities of the sea from Ashdod to Cæsarea, were privileged to hear the voice of the Evangelists, viii. 40, about this time the chamberlain was instructed as to the great salvation, and to announce it to his countrymen, viii. 26, at this time, perhaps, the Christians who were persecuted, were made instrumental in planting the gospel at Damascus, ix. 1. The lovely regions of Sharon, Lydda, and Joppa, remained not unconverted witnesses of the miracles of Peter, ix. 32. Meanwhile, in quietness, but not less efficaciously, the converted Saul preached in his native city, where he at an earlier period had persecuted the Christians, ix. 30. But when first Cornelius was baptized, when multitudes of heathens at Antioch had learned to bow their knee to Jesus, then was a door opened to a great harvest of the Gentiles, and over Cyprus Paul made a way for himself into the midst of the heathen abominations of Asia Minor, thereupon he brought the gospel to Europe, stretching forth her hands, and established Christian churches in its principal cities. Whilst the Jews showed themselves more hardened, on the other hand the Gentiles manifested a greater readiness to receive the gospel; the Apostle did not omit frequently to revisit the places where believers required to be strengthened and comforted. Every where persecution must come upon him, notwithstanding he did not despond; the spirit of God watched over him, and distinguished his path by numerous and distinguished miracles. Even his long captivity in Cæsarea and Rome could only shelter him from his bitter foes, but could not prevent the efficacy which attended his labours.

The object of this book is easily understood. After Luke had completed the biography of Jesus, he would now relate the occurrences in the Christian Church, from the ascension to the present time, and which deserved to be recorded because of their truth and great importance. This leads to the question; whence had Luke, who was no apostle, the knowledge which he has imparted, and why does he record out of the long period of time only these facts and no other?

A great part of what Luke has related here, as the companion of Paul, he had seen, as he has given us to understand, xvi. 19; xviii. 20; iv. 21—26; xxvii. 27. All the other particulars in the second part, and of which he was not an eye-witness, and the account of Paul's conversion in the first part, Luke might have received from the latter himself. But now there are many portions in the first part, which neither Luke nor Paul could have heard or seen, and here the foundation of these seems to have consisted in written documents. It is highly probable the many discourses of Peter, and the long discourse of Stephen, were early held in much estimation, as the one must be regarded as the first public defence of Christianity, and the other as the last words of a Christian martyr. Attentive readers of the Bible have already made the observation, that the discourses of Peter adduced here, agree most exactly even to the very expressions, with his epistles.

But why has Luke narrated so few particulars of the other apostles, and confined himself almost to matters appertaining to Peter and Paul? Upon no other grounds, than as he designed his book should not be long, he preferred to treat a few favourite topics exactly and copiously, rather than many and various subjects concisely. As the friend and intimate companion of Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, he very properly considered that the most important, which could illustrate the call of the Gentiles and the blindness of the Jews. Hence he narrates to Theo-

philus, and in his person to all the Gentiles, how the gospel came to the Gentiles, and what ordinances relative to the Gentile Christians were ordained by the council of the Apostles. The design Luke had has been mentioned already, he has given a history of Missions, and would describe two as such, namely, that which proceeded from Jerusalem and that from Antioch. This now is true, but it cannot be considered his only object, as it grew out of his principal object, which was to write the first history of Christianity. Far more important and fruitful in consequences is the other point of history to which reference has been made. Luke had in view to show the constitution of the newly arisen Christian Churches as an institution of the Spirit. Only this also is not as the chief design, but rather an accompanying conception of the author.

THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

SECOND DIVISION.

THE EPISTLES.

Now, in the series of the New Testament writings, twenty one epistles succeed each other; of these seventeen bear the name of their author, but there is sufficient evidence to show the authority of the other four. They are that to the Hebrews, and the three which we find ascribed to John. Two-thirds of these epistles belong to the Apostle Paul, but the remaining portion to the Apostles Peter, John, James, and Jude. By them the apostles designed to supply the want of their presence in the Christian churches, to testify against false doctrine, and to preserve Christians in the true faith. The churches, as was natural,

preserved these as writings peculiarly holy. They imparted copies of them to one another, Coloss. iv. 16. 2 Pet. iii. 15, and so the most, or the whole of these epistles, came by and bye into the possession of the churches. By circumstances which now we can no more know, there were certain of these epistles, namely, the second of Peter, the second and third of John, the Epistle of James and Jude, the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, and to Philemon, (the latter probably only because of its brevity) which at the beginning were not very widely circulated, and were therefore at a later period acknowledged of apostolic origin with some mistrust, but which, nevertheless, was soon removed again.

From whom the order in which the epistles stand proceeded, we do not know. Thirteen epistles of Paul come first in order, only next after them also should stand the following epistle to the Hebrews, then follow the two epistles of Peter, the three of John, that to the Hebrews, after all, the epistles of James and Jude; which last seven, with the exception of that to the Hebrews, bear the name of general or Catholic Epistles, as the most important of these were directed not to particular persons and churches, but to all Christians in general, or to many churches at the same time.

Bengel has strikingly observed, that the epistles of the New Testament are peculiarly distinguished from the Old Testament. Namely, one does not write a letter to a servant but to a son, and such as has grown up to maturity; also the manner of writing in these epistles, before all, serves for extending the kingdom of God and the nourishment of souls. Whilst these epistles were designed, in the first instance, for the churches in that age, they have an excellence which remaineth for the Christians of all times. Teaching imparted by word of mouth was the main point in founding the churches; but after the church was founded, and the apostles were dead, these epistles were to remain a particular standard, whereby to try

if a man continues in the right faith. In bare oral tradition, the truth was liable to many adulterations. Grant that many counsels of the apostles are adapted to the usages of that time, many proofs for doubts only then, many institutions suited only for that time; grant also, that we should never let escape us as to the first and principal design of these epistles; nevertheless, all the precise striking delineations of our holy faith rest upon them, and they are besides as living proofs of the original efficacy of Christianity, and definitions of the earliest Christian modes of thinking. They hold a similar relation to the gospels as an exposition does to the text; they build upon them, continually explaining and confirming through the particular foundations already laid.

All the truths of our religion have been set forth in a form comprehensible by the most unlearned, set in their connection with each other, and guide us continually backward to the highest of all truths,—the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Even the particular and peculiar circumstances and relations in which, and for which, the epistles were written, render their reading far more profitable and pleasant than had they been written only in a general way without fixed motive and reference. In their great variety and composition by different authors; in particular, the venerable Apostles Paul, Peter, John, and James, we have not to be solicitous, as if, at any time, a Christian doctrine could have been emitted by them, we are instructed by them to believe, that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they were all led to a strict accordance in their views of doctrine. As the history of Jesus was to be attested by a variety of witnesses, in like manner it was the divine will that the doctrines of the gospel should be attested by a variety of witnesses. Guided by the Holy Ghost, which Jesus had promised at his departure, the apostles spake and wrote; by his assistance they knew what, at an earlier period, they could not have comprehended, John xvi. 13, and proclaimed

to others the truth which he imparted to them. Consider, Christian, these affectionate familiar epistles, as if they were written to thee, and seek in them, as the first and purest sources, the instruction and edification which thou canst find no where else in so high a measure. Here are the epistles of the Lord; yea, much rather, here is the Holy Spirit himself thy teacher, and he preaches the great mystery of the incarnation, with all which can enlighten thy weak understanding, and make thy heart great and worthy.

THE EPISTLES OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

The Holy Scripture gives a tolerably copious account of the incidents in connection with the life of Paul. According to his Jewish name, which he afterwards wholly laid aside, he was called Saul;—he was, indeed, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, but was born at Tarsus in Cilicia. By his parents he inherited the rights of Roman citizenship, which brought him many advantages. His education at Tarsus accustomed him to converse with heathens, and made him familiar with the writers and science of the Greeks; he frequently manifests acquaintance with them. When a youth, he went to Jerusalem to devote himself to Jewish literature, and there enjoyed the instruction of the celebrated Gamaliel, Acts xxii. 3; at the same time, according to the Jewish custom, he learned a trade, by which, at a later period, he maintained himself on his missionary travels. It was of importance for him that here he obtained an acquaintance with the fundamental principles of the Pharisees, which, at a later period, he should have to combat with by the power of the Gospel. Very early he shewed himself as a Pharisee, through zeal and activity, and gave proof of this before all by his determined persecution of the churches, who considered him the most dangerous adversary. But, when he, driven by blind zeal, travelled to Damascus to root out the Christians there, Jesus manifested

himself to him, surrounded by a celestial splendour, Acts ix. 7; he rebuked him because of his persecutions to that time, and chose him to be his apostle to the Gentiles. The Lord knoweth his own; he knew also the honest but blinded soul of the man who now served him much more zealously than before he had opposed him. From Damascus, Paul repaired to Arabia, and, after a sojourn in that country of three years, he returned back again to the former city, Jerusalem. His early friends, who had now become his bitter enemies, laying wait for him, permitted him to remain here only a few days. He repaired over Cæsarea to his native city Tarsus, Acts ix. 23. When, about this time, a church had been formed from the heathens at Antioch, Paul was called hither by Barnabas, and laboured with him a year in promoting Christianity there. From hence, during a famine which took place in the forty-ninth year of the Christian era, he carried up a kind contribution for the poor at Jerusalem. Soon after his return, he began his missionary journeys into heathen countries. The Acts of the Apostles narrates to us three such. The first consisted of a journey over the island of Cyprus into the heart of Asia Minor, namely, to Persia, Antioch, Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and the journey back again over the same cities. Barnabas and Mark were his companions here; but who, anon, returned again, Acts xiii. 14. On their return, they found the church at Antioch in a very disturbed condition. Certain Jewish zealots, who took upon them to make the Apostles do many things, denied the admission of the Gentiles into the Christian Church, unless they observed also the whole law of Moses. This caused the Apostle to undertake a journey to Jerusalem, where he laid the question in dispute before the assembled Apostles; and, by them, it was determined in his favour. That every Gentile believer could be acknowledged without farther incumbrance by the Mosaic law, chap. xv. Paul, in company with Silas, undertook a second journey to

confirm the Christians in the new churches. When, in the course of his missionary travels, Timothy and Luke became associated with him, he extended the sphere of his labours much farther, he proceeded to Europe, — he abode at Philippi, Thessalonica, Beræa, and Athens; and, about the year 52, he took up his abode at Corinth, and remained there at least a year and a half, chap. xvi.—xviii. 12. From hence, probably, were written the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. After a short visit at Jerusalem, where he solemnized the passover, he travelled a third time to Antioch, by the way of Asia Minor, and, in particular, to Galatia and Phrygia, and then abode two years and a half at Ephesus. From here, probably, he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians, the Hebrews, and the Epistle to the Corinthians. About the year 55, he was driven away by a very dangerous tumult; he then travelled through Macedonia, from whence the first Epistle to the Corinthians and the first to Timothy were written, to Corinth, where he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, and then returned over Macedonia to Troas, Assos, Mytelene, back to Miletus, chap. xviii. 13. Amidst the warnings of his friends, but prepared for every thing, about the year 56, he undertook a journey to Jerusalem. James advised him, by undertaking the vow of a Nazarite, to prove his respect for the law of Moses, and thereby refute the calumnies of the Jews. Some Jews knew him in the temple, — they raised an uproar, and would have killed him, had not the Roman officer interfered to take him under his protection, when many Jews had sworn to take away his life, so he was conveyed to Cæsarea, where he was detained, in moderate confinement, two long years; at the end of which, after, as a Roman citizen, he had appealed to Cæsar, he was, after a dangerous journey, conveyed to Rome, about the year 59. Here he remained two years in a private house, — found much opportunity to preach the Gospel, and wrote the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Phile-

mon. As the history of the apostle terminates here, so we do not know accurately as to any later circumstances in his life. That he, together with other Christians, was put to death under Nero, a few years afterwards, is the universal opinion of ecclesiastical writers. But whether the apostle was let free before this, and had made yet a few travels, or continued to reside at Rome, they are questions which now we cannot answer with any measure of certainty, though the former opinion seems the more probable. According to the common opinion, the Epistle to John was written between the first and second captivity, and the second to Timothy in the latter. The apostle informs us with how many dangers and disagreeable circumstances this kind of life was combined, 2 Cor. xi. 23, "I have suffered more, (than others), have endured more stripes, been in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; of the Jews five times I received forty stripes. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeys often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

But God had endowed this man with extraordinary spiritual gifts; and, in possessing which, he had a qualification for his high calling. Great quickness and readiness of mind to perceive truth, an extraordinary strength of soul, which holds the truth steadfastly when once perceived,—a warmth of heart which expressed itself in ardent love,—true friendship and conduct expressive of warm feeling, sincerity, and candour,—tender-heartedness,—patience,—courage,—the capacity to adopt himself to all situations, and to be all things to all men,—a steadfastness which, in particular circumstances, hazards every

thing, but, in matters of God, does not yield a hair's breadth,—power,—spirit,—clearness of exposition, these properties adorn the man of God. Whilst he was highly gifted with natural talents, at the same time all received a higher divine direction by the Spirit of God which had been given him in rich measure ; help from on high sanctifying, encouraging, guiding into all truth, shewed itself all over on Paul, and therefore he would not have it considered as if he uttered his own wisdom, 1 Cor. ii. 1 ; he would not that any should esteem his person, such honour is due only to the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. iii. 5 ; and he felt his honour to consist only in this, that he should be his servant.

His whole character presses itself into his epistles. The ardent love to the Churches, in his warm heartfelt language to hearts united together in Christ, in his wishes for their stability and increase, in his paternal prayers and unabated eagerness for their sanctification ; the richness of his thoughts, in the forceable streaming flow of his words, whereby often a word, a thought, gives occasion to spread forth light on different sides. The plain closeness of his Christian knowledge, in the beautiful connection of the Christian doctrine to one perfect, full of life ; The burning activity of his spirit, in the elevation of his discourse, in the accumulation of his ideas, in his eloquent interrogations, objections, turns ; in the succinctness of his style, it is often necessary to analyze his complicated positions to their particular parts, and to bring the one to the understanding after the other ; his consciousness of an elevated divine power which operates in his human weakness, in the power with which he punishes, in the frankness wherewith he gave testimony. Already when a pharisee Paul had dissented from many who then looked upon Christianity as only a particular sect of Judaism, he well knew how directly it is opposed to pharisaism. Hence his strong hatred of Christianity ; and hence the public opposition after his conversion, which he gave

to Pharisaic Judaism; his clear knowledge that we must count all things but loss in comparison with the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus; his decided adherence to this fundamental truth of Christianity. Even to the propagating of this idea the apostle of the Gentiles dedicated himself. Accordingly, on this subject he expresses himself fully in his epistles. Notwithstanding the hatred and persecution of his countrymen, who had lost in him a strong helper, nevertheless it did not dispose his heart to return hatred for hatred, and accordingly his epistles breathe a spirit of gentle sadness and pity when he comes to speak of those who were his kinsmen by descent.

The Epistles of Paul are adapted to meet the peculiar wants of the churches to which they are written, and are consequently different. Their principal subject is, for the most part, the same. Throughout, the great Apostle of the Gentiles declares the superiority of the Christian religion over that of the Old Testament; sets forth distinctly the eternal, also incomprehensible counsel of God in respect of the Gentiles; that we cannot come to happiness by our own works, but only through Jesus, and admonishes to a walk of faith. This he manages through solid proofs, in part taken out of the Old Testament, and through pathetic and pressing applications in a strong lively flow of words. His epistles are as outpourings of his soul; they contain the language of the heart, and speak, therefore, to the heart, Rom. viii. 31; 1 Cor. xiii. 2 Cor. vi. 2 Thess. ii. Betimes sublime, betimes poetical, betimes in tones of easy conversation, betimes in a deep manner of thought, and wholly peculiar; and in long complex subjects they contain sublime ideas of Christianity, and excellent rules of moral conduct. The epistles which he wrote to churches, and were not addressed to particular persons, namely, the Epistle to the Romans, the Hebrews, and Colossians, are by their nature somewhat more general, but they are also higher and more solemn. Whether he

writes to churches he knew, and which were founded by himself, or to an individual who had been converted by himself; we believe ourselves to read the affectionate, open, confiding letter of a father to his son, full of sympathy, full of merited praise or blame, full of joy and grief at their condition. In the epistles written during his captivity, he forgets entirely his own condition, and lives full of submission to the Divine will, full of tranquillity and strength of faith, occupied only with the sublime subjects of Christ and believers.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

This epistle was written when Paul was about to bring to Jerusalem alms which had been collected out of Macedonia and Achaia, xv. 25: he feared dangers from the Jews, xv. 31; when there he was in the house of Gaius and Erastus, xvi. 23; and it was conveyed by Phæbe, a servant of the Church, at Cenchræa, xvi. 1. From these circumstances we fairly conclude the epistle was written from Corinth, and before the the last journey to Jerusalem, Acts xx. 1 and 3, which was succeeded by his imprisonment. Then Paul had not yet been at Rome, i. 13; but earnestly longed after it, and even really came to it three years afterwards, but a prisoner. The good accounts which he had received of the Roman church, and the wish he had to guard them against many errors which the Jewish Christians had brought into circulation, also to impart to them some spiritual gift, prompted him to write.

Though Christianity appears to have gained a footing early at Rome, notwithstanding we have little accurate intelligence concerning the founding of the Church there; possibly travelling Christians now and then (Andronicus and Junia) brought the Gospel thither, xvi. 7; possibly Jews banished by Claudius, who soon returned again to Italy, having, during their banishment, learned to know the Word of Life; this was

the case at least with Aquilla and Priscilla, Rom. xvi. 3, and Acts xviii. 2. Yet Christians were surely there before that time, because of the extraordinary multitudes of travellers who yearly from all corners of the world flowed to and from Rome; the contrary is inconceivable. Even at the outpowering of the Holy Spirit Romans were present, Acts ii. 10. It is remarkable, but not inexplicable, that the distinguished Jews at Rome which Paul permitted to come to him on his arrival there, appear to know nothing of the Christian Church there, Acts xxviii. 21. Possibly they had not concerned themselves about it, as it consisted chiefly of persons formerly Gentiles and poor Jews. The Church must have been composed from both, as Paul addresses both; possibly it was not yet numerous, and had escaped the notice of those who, in the great Rome, troubled themselves only with worldly things.

Interpreters are agreed about the excellence of the contents of our epistle, and the obscurity of particular portions. Of the former, Luther has observed,—“This epistle is the genuine principal article of the New Testament, and the purest gospel of all. It is, indeed, so estimable, and has such a value, that the Christian should not only know its outward part word by word, but should also hold converse with it daily, as the daily bread of the soul. For it never can be read and considered too much, and too well; and the more it would be considered, it would be more precious, and tastes better.” To the obscurity which distinguishes this epistle, Jerome, the most learned of the fathers, has testified. He often laid aside this epistle and said, “Paul, thou desirest not to be understood!” On that account, to understand this epistle aright, is necessary not only earnest prayer to God, and deep meditation, but also such a child-like submission of mind as does not carry its own views into the book, but which submits to be instructed wholly from it. But, in the main point, the epistle is plain; and, as

Luther says, is almost sufficient to cast a light over the whole scripture.

Besides the introduction, i. 1—15 ; and the conclusion, chap. xvi. the epistle comprehends two parts, i. 16—xi. 36 ; and xii. 1—xv. 33. The former of them delivers important truths of Christian doctrines, but the latter, particular admonitions and precepts. The substance of the first, the apostle has given us as in a theme at i. 16 and 17. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. This position, which is highly important for us, as we thence learn what Paul acknowledged as the fundamental truth of Christianity, he illustrates as follows :—“ The heathen could have formed for themselves, from nature and conscience, a more correct knowledge of God, nevertheless, they were darkened in their understandings, and sinners in the highest degree guilty, i. 18—ii. 16. But the Jews, who however have possessed the law of God, are become through breach of same, as the Gentiles, ii. 17 ; iii. 20 ; and now there is given for both no other way of salvation than was prepared through the law and the prophets, and is now made manifest by Jesus, a righteousness without merit, of free grace without the works of the law, only through faith, iii. 21—31. This is illustrated in the matter of Abraham, whose example influenced the Jews much to what is good, he was justified not by works, but by faith, iv. 1—25. Now follows a fine description of the righteousness of faith ; this righteousness brings peace with God, hope of the future glory, and true felicity, v. 1—11. To this salvation all men are called ; for even, as by the first Adam, sin and death have been diffused among all men, so shall now even the merit of Jesus be capable of an equal diffusion, v. 12—21. To prevent every misconception, the apostle now shows that every one who belongs to Christ has become dead to sin, and

must serve him, who is his Lord, with body and spirit, vi. 1—25 ; and that, in order thereto, man did not need the law of Moses, which, indeed, is in itself good, but has not furnished strength against the power of sin in the flesh, vii. 1—25. In opposition to the mournful condition of men who stand under the laws of Moses, has been now described the glory of the sons of God according to their present sanctification and future blessedness, viii. 1—39. Now, from the ninth to the eleventh chapter, Paul speaks of the mystery of election, he laments that the Jews, who hitherto had received so great things from God, had so small a share in this righteousness ; but remarks, that the choice of God is free, and this result was announced long before by the prophets. The Jews, by their indiscretion, have made themselves guilty, whilst they look for a wholly different righteousness ; nevertheless, God has not forsaken his people ; the better part of the Jews have embraced the Gospel ; by the fall of the other part is the Gospel brought to the Gentiles, and would, at a future time, go back again from them upon Israel.

The other part contains divers moral precepts, some of which are very copious, xii.—xv.

Hence we also learn the design of this epistle. Do we consider it in general, so it is no other than to set in its proper light, the worth and importance of Christianity for all people. The Gospel,—this is the general tenor,—assures all men, to whatever nation they may belong, in the exercise of faith on a crucified Jesus, deliverance from all their wants ; in particular, the pardon of their sins, so far as they feel themselves sinners and worthy of punishment,—consolation, so far as they know themselves to bear a nature subject to death and suffering,—a higher divine aid, so far as they feel themselves to possess a weak being.

With these general designs were united, at the same time, certain particular views which originated in the situation of the church at that time. Also at Rome, as elsewhere, there might have been

Jewish teachers labouring to exalt the Judaism of that day, or teachers labouring to advance Paganism, against these it was proper to warn the Christians. Accordingly, the Apostle not only shows the imperfection of the Mosaic law, ii. 17; iii. 9; viii. 3, but he refutes particular objections which had been made, especially on the side of the Jews, iii. 1—8; vi. 1, 9, 14.

When composed, as this church was, of persons who had formerly been Jews and Gentiles, admonitions to unity must have been peculiarly seasonable, xiv. 1—xv. 13. The Jewish Christians always indulged a secret pride, because of their descent from Abraham, and their adherence to the laws of Moses. They laid peculiar claims to a place in the Messiah's kingdom, and often endeavoured to bring the Gentile Christians to embrace the ceremonial law. Upon the other side, the latter were inclined to undervalue the Jews, and to pride themselves on their peculiar wisdom. Now the apostle endeavours to unite the two parties. To the former he shews that the Gentiles have as good a right as they to the kingdom of God; the latter he admonishes to cherish love to the opposite party, xiv. 1; xv. 3, and warns them against contempt for the Jews, xi. 1—5, and 11 and 17. The warning, also, to bear the weak with patience, has reference to this state of things, in particular, chap. xiv.

In fine, the apostle warns the Christians at Rome, as also, in his other epistles to other churches, against the peculiar failings to which they were most liable; for example, falling again into pagan vices, xiii. 13; against pride and self-conceit, xii. 16; against impatience and rebellion, xiii. 1—7, to which their residence in the precincts of a heathen government could give occasion.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

Paul wrote this epistle during his third journey, at the end of his abode in Ephesus, xvi. 8, after he had

shortly before, sent Timothy over Macedonia, 1 Cor. iv. 17, and Acts xix. 22.

Paul had founded this church a few years before, and made it strong by a residence among them of a year and a half. But, after his departure, the church fell into a declining state, abuses manifested themselves, sects and parties arose, and the estimation in which the apostle was held ceased on the part of a large portion of the church. The paternal love of Paul to this church, and the wish not to be troubled with a second visit, urged him to write. Besides, it was very necessary that a Christian Church should have been situate in this very large, admirably commodious, rich, but also very vicious commercial city, and it might give a good example. Hence Paul wrote an epistle which, however, has not come down to us, (1 Cor. v. 9.) Also, it appears not to have had effect. As Ephesus and Corinth were not far distant, and were connected by commerce, Paul must have received many unpleasant accounts respecting that Christian Church, which grieved much his paternal heart. In fine, there came even Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, as deputies of the Corinthian Church, or perhaps only a part of it, and brought, as well copious oral information, as an epistle with many questions, occasioned partly by the state of the church, and in part by Paul's first epistle. After this, Paul wrote the second epistle, which is our first, and transmitted it by the aforesaid men.

As the Corinthian Church is a picture, even of the tumults and occurrences which have presented themselves again in larger measure in the history of the church; in like manner, also, this letter is a true pattern of pastoral prudence, and a living proof how the public relations of a church and the directions of life should be penetrated by the spirit of Christianity. Upon the one side, there manifested itself in the Corinthian Church, a certain tormenting life-embittering party, which, seeking salvation only in the letter, made conscience of objecting against all which only

in a very slight manner differed from their opinion; and they would at no time acknowledge as a Christian brother any who did not think and feel as they did. Opposed to this so stern manner of feeling, was held a too liberal view of Christian liberty, a perverted licentiousness, which denied that conscience had any thing to do in the forming of religious opinion, and which despised the opposite mode of thinking as vulgar and common. Without farther remark, it is quite obvious that the portion of the Christians at Corinth who had been educated in Judaism, leaned to the former opinion, whilst the lively restless Greeks, who, in their endless variety of opinion, often overlooked the useful, felt themselves at home only in the latter view. Yet the opposite parties do not appear to have been so far moved that the former longed for a full return to Judaism, or that the latter, in their sense of freedom, had approved of an immoral walk: only the unity of the church was destroyed in a sad way; the deepest questions relative to Christianity were decided on in a spirit of party; the discipline of the church lay prostrate; and men saw Christians with Christians in angry array before the pagan tribunals. With true apostolic wisdom, the apostle now goes into these relations; he shews each party how far it holds itself in a right foundation, and where their failings originate;—he throws light upon the controverted questions from the higher historical point of a pure and living Christianity, and applies all in such a way as was calculated to unite again those who had been separated. However, a more exact specification of the contents of our epistle will lead us to know the relations of the Corinthian Church.

1. From chap i.—iv. the apostle speaks of the sects which were arisen in the church since his departure. He found these no less than four parties, who took their names after the teachers whom they followed. There was a party of Paul, of Apollos, of Caiphas, and Christ, i. 12. The last honoured name was assumed by that party which professed to have

been formed by the brothers of the Lord, James, Jude, and Simon, ix. 5. Of these four parties, the two first and the two last appear to have coincided, so that, virtually, they consisted only of two principal parties. The first consisted of Christians who had been heathens; they retained many abuses from heathenism,—were lifted up with pride on account of their riches, and were unfeeling towards the poorer Christians; but, as they professed profounder views of the Gospel than the other party, they would not allow themselves to be bound by the ceremonial law, and stood fast in the doctrine of Paul. Some of these, however, without doubting the doctrine itself, preferred, to his artless delivery, the more oratorical and artificial elocution of a certain Apollos. This Apollos was a learned man, deeply versed in Jewish and pagan philosophy, who had come to Corinth, and there was converted by friends of the apostle, Acts xviii. 26. He soon began even to teach, and found many auditors, who greatly admired his manner, formed after the mode usual in the schools of the Grecian philosophers, i. 22. In views of doctrine he entirely agreed with Paul, iii. 6; and, at a somewhat later period, the two became acquainted and friends, xvi. 12. The other principal party consisted, indeed, of plain Jewish Christians; they were zealous for the ceremonial law of Moses,—they refused to acknowledge in Paul the dignity of an apostle, and improperly ascribed a precedence, in this particular, to Peter and the brethren of the Lord. By their name, probably, this latter party designed to signify that, whilst joined to a genuine apostle of Christ, they connected themselves with Christ himself; and, whilst they ascribed this name exclusively to themselves, they designed to declare that they did not reckon the other Christians at Corinth, genuine disciples of Christ, but considered them as disciples of a man who had falsified the doctrine of Christ.

But it is not impossible there was another shade of this party. Perhaps it consisted of men who had

been instructed in the Greek philosophy; in that case, borne away by the overwhelming power of the Gospel, they sought to unite the two together. Whilst the other parties acknowledged Paul, Peter, and Apollos, as their founders, influenced by a spirit of partiality, they raised themselves far above these, and maintained the doctrine of Jesus and the Apostles to be distinct from each other; and, finally, the former they professed to have derived more from their own reason than the traditionary views imparted by the apostles, an example which has again found imitators in modern times. If our opinion be correct, it was against this latter sect in particular Paul directed the things he said of the vanity of the wisdom of this world, and against the pretensions of unenlightened reason. The apostle declares man should receive, with implicit submission, the teaching of God. This was the condition of the church at that time; Paul now condemned, before all, the division of the church, and declares he had no part in it, i. 19—31, hereupon he vindicates himself before the partisans of the manner and wisdom of Apollos, how he had declared the word of God in its simplicity, and far from human wisdom, but in its divine power and purity, ii. 1—iii. 4; he shows that all teachers are nothing but the servants of Christ, iii. 5—23; and, finally, in opposition to the Jewish Christians, asserts his apostolic dignity. He censures all the parties for the disunion which prevailed among them. Christ only is the head, and other teachers are only instruments who should guide men to him. There are divers gifts, but by these teachers are the more qualified for usefulness to be all things to all men. They are called to labour hand in hand together, not to destroy their respective operations. Their duty is to lead to Christ, not to their own particular person; they are servants to the church, not its lords. It was the effect of modesty that Paul refers to the truth as held by him and Apollos, thereby he put it in the power of the other parties to draw the proper conclusion as to

their teachers. Whilst Paul defends his simple manner of setting forth truth against the more eloquent manner of Apollos, so he has particularly in view the pride of knowledge, for which the Greeks were remarkable. Of a religion which he had gladly preached in a plain way, they had made a new system of philosophic wisdom, and had banished the whole of Christianity from life into the lecture room. He demands of those who had made great proficiency in science, and who were elated because of their knowledge, to strive after that love which had departed from them, and which, nevertheless, is the best talent.

2. Paul had heard, that a Corinthian Christian lived in illicit intercourse with his step-mother, and, nevertheless, was not excluded the communion of the church. Now, he does this, he blames the church on his account, and adds ordinances respecting chastity and modesty, which were particularly adapted for this voluptuous city, chap. v. and vi. 12—20, and he must have enjoined this once already in his first epistle, which, in respect of us, has been lost.

3. By the imperfection of human nature, Christianity certainly had not put a full end to law-suits. But, in other churches, the custom was to settle disputes by arbitrators chosen from the church. On the contrary, the spirit of dissension had such unhappy effect in the Corinthian church, that the Christians of this city allowed their law-suits to be determined by the Pagan tribunals. Paul now blames them for this, that they as Christians could dispute with each other, and when, alas, it was come so far, that they would not rather let their disputes be settled by plain arbitrators from their own society, vi. 1—11.

4. After this he answers the particular questions which the Corinthians had put to him in respect of marriage. If the state of marriage is generally lawful? If marriage between Christians and unbelievers would be continued? If widows might again marry? and he answers all together; however, he advises,

because of their oppressed circumstances, that such single persons as could accommodate themselves to that should continue single, chap. vii. These doubts, as to the divine obligation of marriage, surely did not originate from the Jewish Christians, who were rather of the mind, on this subject, entertained by the ancient Israelites, according to which a marriage, followed by a numerous offspring, is a peculiar blessing of heaven; but, probably, from that portion of the followers of Paul who were unmarried, they considered him as their author and head. So here Paul has decided most impartially against them.

5. A question far more important, as concerned the Corinthians,—if it be permitted to go to feasts where meat offered to idols would be eaten, and if one might buy such at market? He answers very fully: The Gentile Christians had allowed themselves to do both, and thereby had given offence to the Jewish Christians. They offered, in their justification, that they considered this flesh only as ordinary meat, and that they gave no idol worship. The Apostle, indeed, justifies their conduct; but observes, as the heathen gods have been evil spirits, and as a participation in their feasts had given offence to weak Christians, he would lay down for their guidance this general rule:—If there is one present, a Christian or a heathen, who considers he is present at that, as the Lord's Supper, or an exercise of idol worship, in such circumstances the Christian shall eat no flesh, so long as he knows it has been thus offered; but, where he knows the contrary to be the case, then he shall make no conscience to purchase and to eat. Here the apostle refers to himself as an example, and shows how often he had denied himself, in consideration of the weak, but where, so far as he was personally concerned, he felt at full liberty to have acted otherwise, chap. viii.—x.

6. Here the apostle comes to speak on a subject, briefly, however, vii. 20—23, which was of the highest importance to the first Christian church, and

which, in our day, has been much discussed. Notwithstanding what formerly may have been said in favour of slavery, and what may be said on the same side now, by the Southern States of North America, who boast so very much of their vital Christianity and free constitution, it cannot be contradicted, that the spirit of Christianity is entirely against the holding of slaves; whilst Christianity awakens in the slaves the feeling of human dignity and human rights, at the same time it excites in masters the sentiment of the injustice there is, that they treat beings, who are every way their equals, like a matter of ordinary traffic. Masters and slaves, who were drawn over to Christianity, rank, in all respects, alike at the love-feasts, at divine worship, and in all Christian assemblies, whilst in civil life they stand separated by an insurmountable barrier. But, upon the other side, Christianity will not confound the spiritual with the external; it will not produce a sudden revolution in civil matters, and for that reason Paul does not demand of masters, that without delay they should let their slaves go free. Christianity will much rather form from within outward; it will bring forth the feeling which, without fail, produces the outward transformation; but, until it had come to this, the slaves had to accommodate themselves to their situation, and Paul demands this of them, he reminds them of the spiritual dignity and freedom to which they have been elevated through Christ.

7. The remark above shows how deeply Christianity influences the most momentous concerns of humanity: so, on the other hand, what follows proves that it extends not less to matters seemingly insignificant, to manners and outward grace. It had also delivered the female portion of society from the slavery in which they were held by the Greeks, but the freedom was pressed to a great length when women took upon themselves, and stood forth openly to be teachers, to appear unveiled in the assemblies was

entirely against the custom of antiquity. To this refer the extended remarks of the apostle, xi. 1—16.

8. In the entire ancient church, with the celebration of the Lord's Supper was associated what have been called love-feasts; they, the aforesaid feasts, united Christians of every rank and station at a common meal; it was designed to give occasion to great intimacy among the members of the church, and a feeling of their unity before God, consolation amid all the diversities of outward condition. Then, after this, the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper was enjoyed. The Greeks, and particularly the voluptuous Corinthians, who, from earliest youth, had been accustomed to associate at a common supper, appear to have introduced many observances, whereby the religious and humane design of the love-feasts was wholly destroyed, and what should be a medium of union for the church was rather made to minister to painful separation. Whilst the aforesaid different parties, on this occasion, associated only with one another, a failing he imputes alike to all, the Greeks brought with them many and choice kinds of food, and laid them out before the eyes of the abashed and hungry poor, gormandizing which caused much scandal. Thereby they well deserved the sharp censure of the apostle, who puts them in mind of the original institution of the Lord's Supper, xi. 17—34.

9. The misusage of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit had led to an irregularity of a peculiar kind. At Corinth, as well as many other places, the reception of the gospel was accompanied, namely, by the latter. A more profound knowledge of the truths of religion, the talent to deliver appropriate discourses, extraordinary trust in difficult undertakings, the power to work miracles, namely, to heal the sick, to foretel future events, to distinguish the true prophets from false, to speak in strange tongues, to explain what had been spoken. These were the gifts which had been imparted to particular Christians.

But there was frequently a bad use made of them. Some Christians prided themselves on their gifts, and besides despised others who possessed no, or less striking endowments; others used their gifts, particularly the capacity to speak in a strange tongue, too often in the church, which did not understand a word; often many spoke at the same time, and thereby still more destroyed devotion. The foundation of this consisted in the national character of the Greeks, and, at a later period, this spirit was at work in the church of the Greeks, when they exhibited pompous words, and possessed the gift of a bold and transporting delivery, to the less striking, but perhaps more useful endowments. On this account now Paul remarks, that all talents have an equal value, as coming from the one Holy Spirit; that he knew yet better gifts, namely, faith, hope, and, in particular, charity, after which every one should strive. A discourse, in a strange tongue, he will permit only then when one is there who explains it, in that also the church would be edified by those means, and according to the arrangement made by the apostle relative to this matter, at no time should more than three have succeeded one another in discourses of such nature. They should strive chiefly after the gift of interpretation, but strange tongues they should employ more for the family, or for the confutation of gainsayers, than for the public congregation, chap. xii.—xiv.

10. Finally, the doubts of certain Christians at Corinth occasioned Paul to write an excellent treatise on the resurrection, in which has been declared partly its truth and importance, partly the nature, and partly the time of the same, chap. xv. It is certainly remarkable, that already the first Church presents itself before us a doubter in a truth so generally and plainly announced. Did they belong to the Jewish Christians, and had they their origin in maxims which they formerly held when Pharisees? or were they Greeks, who before, by the doctrine of Epicurus, were brought to unbelief in a better future; but cer-

tainly also, in all particulars higher and divine? It is difficult to account for it by these, as the Sadducees and Epicureans, because of preconceived opinions, were so inaccessible to the evidence of Christianity. If our opinion of the party who called themselves by the name of Christ be right, which has been before explained, we might perhaps look for these doubts in a resurrection amidst them. They were Gentile Christians, of a certain philosophic fashion, who, after all, derived their faith only from their own reason; they might certainly have consented to the immortality of the soul, but have opposed themselves the more to the resurrection. They had perhaps explained it spiritually, whilst the perverted spirit of liberty which in that day taught them to rise no higher than in matters of ordinary life and business, laid its impress on the department of doctrine. Against them the apostle maintains the reality of the resurrection.

The conclusion consists of advices as to the raising of alms, purposes of journey, and salutations.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

This epistle was written not long after the first. When composing the former, the design of Paul was to travel to Corinth, by the way of Macedonia; and when he wrote the second, he still continued at Macedonia, ii. 13; after that he had suffered before a severe persecution at Ephesus, i. 8. All this corresponds exactly in respect of date, with the notification which has been made of these matters in the Acts of the Apostles, xix. 21. During his sojourn in Macedonia Titus brought him intelligence how the first epistle had been received at Corinth, vii. 8. This intelligence, and also the wish that certain necessary matters should be done, in particular, that the collection should be made, and which he designed to bring with him for the poor Jewish Christians in Palestine, ix. 5. These matters occasioned him to write this epistle,

x. 2; xii. 14. Titus was the conveyer of it, who returned accompanied by two assistants, of whom one appears to have been Luke, viii. 16—23.

These circumstances render intelligible to us the contents of this epistle. The information which Titus had brought was partly of an agreeable, and in part of a disagreeable nature. The news which was agreeable had respect to the converts from paganism, who had manifested great attachment to the apostle. The man also who, on account of illicit intercourse with his stepmother, had been excluded from the communion of the Church, having been brought to real and heartfelt repentance, the apostle permits he should be restored to communion, ii. 5—11; vii. 11. Then the new admonitions against lewdness were not in vain in this corrupted city, 12—21. At the same time, the tendency to sectarianism had not yet ceased; the alienated parties had by no means approximated each other again, and the apostle saw before that on his coming he would have to meet with disputes, jealousies, passion, slanders, whisperings, swellings, uproar, xii. 20. He feared he would see himself reduced to the mournful necessity that, instead of the exercise of his previous forbearance, he would be forced to put forth his apostolical power by the infliction of some striking judgment, xiii. 2. His enemies took advantage from the first epistle thence to raise new objections against him. They maintained the change as to the plan of his journey as proof of a weak mind, i. 17—23. They described him as a great talker, and whose uniform object was to extol himself, iii. 1, and they remarked maliciously, that whilst his epistles breathed a threatening and sharp spirit, nevertheless when he would come, he would show himself to be a very weak person, x. 10. Against their attacks the apostle defended himself.

After an appeal to their consciences, and the asseveration that he had ever preached the pure doctrine of Jesus, he begins by saying he had not felt it necessary to say much in the way of personal commenda-

tion, this was sufficiently done for him by the church at Corinth, which he had formed, iii. 3. But he also acknowledges that the great things he had accomplished had been brought about not by him but by God, iii. 4—6. Besides, he speaks here on the dignity of a preacher of the gospel, iii. 7—vi. 10, which he paints very much to the life. Hereupon follow admonitions against lewdness, vi. 11—vii. 1, concerning restoration to the church of the person who had been excluded, vii. 2—16; concerning a collection for the poor Jewish Christians, chap. viii.—ix., a matter in which Paul took a peculiar concern, Gal. ii. 10. From the tenth chapter, to the end, he replies to the objections which had been made against him; he had, he says, the same privileges as the other apostles; he had made himself particularly servicable to the Corinthians, whilst he had never accepted the least acknowledgment from them; he had laboured and suffered far more on account of the gospel, than his enemies, also he had been favoured with visions and divine revelations. Finally, he vindicates himself that he had expressed so many things of himself, as he had been forced to this by his enemies.

This epistle enables us to see clearly into the soul of the apostle. Not only the state of the church at Corinth, betimes filled his soul with joy and with sorrow, but also the time when he wrote his epistle, i. 8. and the place of his abode, gave occasion to tribulations, under which he could have been supported only by trust in God, a righteous cause, and the aids of the Holy Spirit. Hence it has been well observed, that from no other epistle can one discern the character of the apostle so exactly as from this, where he has described himself wholly in his peculiar properties, and with an emotion of soul which is perceptible in almost every line. One justly wonders at the strength of soul manifesting itself in him, under pinching cares and outward tribulations, which had wrought upon it from on high sufficient power to impart to others even of its own consolation; a good conscience,

which gives witness before God ; the noble self-consciousness in the look at that he had accomplished, by the assistance of God ; the tender care for others, and the deep sorrow he felt on account of their wants and necessities ; the unflinching trust in God under circumstances highly dangerous ; the deep conviction as to the divine dignity of the gospel to proclaim which he was called ; the willing submission to trials in order that the will of God might be fulfilled ; on this account also there prevails in this epistle, an expression of heart, which must necessarily touch the heart, and an overwhelming convictive power, as he ever manifests himself there, where, in the consciousness of his righteous cause, he defends himself an innocent person, yet the more assailed.

Happy is he who can present to the affliction of his time, a faith as firm, and a conscience as good as Paul's.

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

We cannot ascertain exactly the time at which our epistle was written. This Galatia was not a city, but a thickly inhabited province of Asia Minor ; it had its name from Gauls or rather Germans, who, a long time before Christ, left their native country, and, after long wanderings, had settled there, the region having been ceded to them by the king of Nicomedia, as a reward for military services. There they mingled themselves with the natives, who were of Grecian descent ; at a later period they became subject to the Romans, as indeed were all the neighbouring people, who at first permitted them their own kings, but afterwards sent in their stead governors. It appears that the German language had been long retained by them ; for when, a thousand years later, the Crusaders passed through that country, they were no little surprised that they and the natives mutually understood each other. Besides, among them as every where, numerous Jewish families had

settled, who enjoyed important civil protection. Paul on his travels had planted Christianity at Galatia, iv. 13, and his labours there had not only been received with love and affection, which were evinced by enduring recollections, but also they had been followed by numerous and rich blessings, iii. 3—v. 7. But soon after his departure, certain Jewish Christians, his dangerous adversaries, came to the church, there they pressed continually the perpetual obligation of the Mosaic law, and really endangered the church of falling back again into Judaism, i. 6. They insisted on circumcision as a necessary observance for Christians, v. 2, as well as the reception of the Jewish feasts and holy days, iv. 10,^a and preached righteousness, not by faith, but by the works of the law, iii. 5, whilst they palliated their opposition to the doctrine of Paul, by the denial of his apostolic dignity,

^a The intelligent reader will see the importance of the following remarks on feasts, holy days, or Christian festivals:—“Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian of the fifth century, properly observes, (L. 5. 22.), Christ and the Apostles had given no law about the solemnizing of holy days, but committed this to the free expression of mere grateful feeling, in consideration of the divine benefits. But the multiplication of feasts is no proof of the quickness and fervour of these feelings; for the first Christians believed, even as their whole life was continually pervaded by their feelings, as their whole life was one more spiritual, as the opposition between Christianity and the world appeared everywhere more striking, therefore they required the less such outward mediums of remembering and excitement; and every Friday, as the day of the passion of Christ, and every Sunday, as the day of the resurrection, was sufficient excitement for them. Whilst the feasts were multiplied, there formed a less strict difference between the feasts and the remaining life of Christians, and this lost its original spiritual character. The fathers of the church had to complain, that, in the largest cities, many believed they had done enough for religion, when, on the feast days, they frequented the churches; that on those days the churches were crowded, and on the other days were almost empty; that on the days of the principal feasts one could find the same men in the church who, on the other days, preferred the theatre and circus to the church.” *Denkwürdigkeiten aus des Geschichte des Chistenthum und des Christlichen leben. Zweiter band. Von Dr. A. Neander.*

iv. 17. For a plain simple people as the Galatians, these discourses were the more dangerous, as no one appeared among them who undertook to defend Paul against the bitter attacks.

It was high time that Paul should stand forth to avert the threatened danger, by his word full of power. Here then the apostle does not rest on his apostolic authority as at Corinth, but on the substance of the gospel itself. In our epistle he appears continually in the consciousness of his dignity, and his righteous cause. In the very first words, he begins by asserting he was a real apostle, and he proves this, and also the truth of his doctrine, by the mention of his early state, and the revelation of Christ which had been made to him. Formerly, indeed, he valued much the favour and respect of men, but now, since he had become the servant of Christ, he teaches and acts only as one who had to answer before God. His views of doctrine had been imparted to him not by the other apostles, but Christ himself; the former had really acknowledged him an apostle, yea he had convicted Peter and Barnabas of weak conduct at Antioch, i. 1—10, and i. 11—ii. 21. In the sequel he defends his doctrine of justification, which stood directly opposed to the assertions of his Jewish adversaries, and their self-righteousness. The Galatians had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, not by the works of the law, iii. 1—5. Already in the covenant with Abraham, the promise had been given to faith; the law, on the contrary, had no promise, much rather it brings the curse upon all, as no one had yielded perfect obedience to it, iii. 6—18. The law had come only as an intermediate institution, necessary to a being whose will is depraved, as a schoolmaster pointing to Christ, as a teacher for the childhood of humanity, iii. 19—iv. 3. Now the Son of God has delivered us from this taskmaster, and made us become the children of God, iv. 4—7. For that reason the apostle blames the Galatians that they would let themselves become oppressed again with

the old yoke, by men who did not seek their good, but their own honour, iv. 8—20, and he calls yet once, their attention to the history of Abraham, iv. 21—31. Whereon he then writes a new admonition to continue in the liberty procured for them by Christ, yet so that this should not give occasion to the flesh, v.—vi. 10. After this the conclusion follows, vi. 11—18.

The great energy and animation wherewith Paul writes, proceeded from the importance of the object about which he was employed. The question was not, might “the Christians from paganism, under certain circumstances, follow the law of Moses?” Against this Paul would not have made objection. But this stirred up his soul, that his adversaries maintained, “the Christians from heathenism, must observe the ceremonial law,—apart from the latter, Christianity availeth them not. The fulfilling of the law is necessary to salvation; it is the meritorious cause, on account of which man has a right to the divine favour.” By this assertion the Jewish teachers not only contradicted the clear and positive decision of the assembly of apostles, Acts xv. 23—29, but they denied also altogether the depravity of human nature; they placed the institutes of Christianity in a manner below those of Judaism, Christ beneath Moses; they emptied the death of Jesus of its acceptation as full of salvation and power; they lowered God to the condition of debtor to men: in short, they brought back again the whole perversity from which Paul was conscious of having escaped on conversion, and because of which, his soul was filled with joy. Upon the other side, it became the great doctrinal wisdom of Paul, to set forth the assertion, that salvation comes not by fulfilling of the law, but through faith. Here, as also in other epistles, he gives admonitions to holiness, without which, errors and false conclusions might have been come to by so plain people, and such atrocious enemies. The apostle ever comes to this, that his doctrine does not weaken, but animate

a virtuous zeal. Then he acknowledges that the faith which has the hope of salvation, is a living faith; and even this hope upon the free grace of God, this love of Christ, which he has explained so clearly, constrains to a joyful and salutary following after Christ.

It is impossible to mistake the great resemblance between this and the Epistle to the Romans. The like relations in the two churches brought the apostle into the circumstances of holding forth in the two epistles, great sameness in doctrines and precepts. For the doctrine of justification, the fundamental doctrine of the evangelical church, they are both of particular importance. In the observations concerning the institutions of the Old Testament religion, we may observe a great resemblance of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

This epistle was written by Paul during his captivity at Rome, and was conveyed to Ephesus by Tychicus, iii. 1, iv. 1, vi. 21.

Ephesus, the principal city of Proconsular Asia, was famous, not only on account of its flourishing trade, for which it was well adapted, being situate on a commodious place of the sea; it was also renowned for the beautiful temple of Diana, which was reckoned one of the seven wonders of the old world. Here also many Jewish families had settled, who possessed even a synagogue, Acts xix. 8. Paul was twice there; the first time he came was when passing through the city on his way to Jerusalem, Acts xviii. 19, and his promise, made in answer to their friendly entreaties, that he should remain longer, induced him to come back there a second time, Acts xix. 1. Here then, during a residence of two years and a half, he gathered a numerous church, particularly from among the heathen, but even this auspicious circumstance gave occasion to an uproar, in consequence of which he was driven from the city. Indeed, he came no more

back again, but as the church lay near to his heart, when at a later period he passed by, he allowed the elders of the church to meet him at Miletus, and took an affecting leave of them, Acts xx. 21. In no other church had Paul laboured so long as in this, therefore we expect that, in this epistle, he would have written even in a paternal and familiar way, that he would have taken into consideration the particular circumstances of the church, and inasmuch as he had many acquaintances, that he would have made at least, particular salutations; but of all these we do not find a trace. He shows no remembrance of the long residence at Ephesus, and the efficacy which accompanied him there as an apostle, he has not recognised even personal friends. This remark, together with two observations of the fathers, namely, that many old manuscripts did not contain the phrase in the first verse "To Ephesus," and that certain other manuscripts, instead of this, had the words "To the Laodiceans," to whom Paul had also written, Coloss. iv. 16. These circumstances give great presumption to the supposition that our epistle was written, not for one church only, but that it may have been designed to be a circular to many churches, namely to Ephesus, Laodicea, and even to others. This feature characterises also the Epistle to the Galatians and Hebrews, and the larger portion of the epistles of the other apostles. The circumstance that the epistle has borne the name Ephesus, proves that Ephesus was the most considerable among the churches to which the epistle had been written. Also, through these views we gain the settled conviction, that the Epistle to the Laodiceans, to which Paul has attached particular moment, Coloss. iv. 16, has not been lost to us, and without these grounds we could hardly maintain such conviction.

Paul in his captivity at Rome had received good news concerning the churches of Asia, i. 15, and he was willing now to contribute something in the way of a treatise, in order to the confirming and strength-

ening of their faith. As they consisted for the most part of persons who formerly had been heathens, so he in this epistle insisted mainly on the truth, iii. 6, that the Gentiles are joint heirs, and had been incorporated with the Jews, and made partakers of the promise in Christ, through the gospel. The epistle consists of two parts. In the first three chapters he has described the calling of the Gentiles to Christianity; and first according to their foreordination of God, i. 3—14, then according to its actual fulfilment, i. 15—ii. 3, and finally, according to its glory, ii. 4—22. All which is repeated in the third chapter. The three last chapters contain the duties to which Christianity calls. Herein exhortations are given, and in particular to Christian unity, iv. 1—16, avoidance of the vices to which the readers of the epistle in their former condition had been inclined, iv. 17—v. 21, the duties of the married state, v. 22—33, of children and parents, vi. 1—4, of masters and servants, vi. 5—9, and in fine to steadfast faith in the gospel, vi. 10—20, after this the conclusion follows, with a benediction. As already observed, in this epistle we do not meet with the personal references which often lend a particular charm to the other epistles of Paul, but this is compensated for in rich measure by its sublimity and elevation. The great apostle of the Gentiles, who has here described particularly the duties incumbent on the churches he had formed, was exempted here from the disagreeable necessity which had been laid upon him, first to defend himself, and to combat others. Here he insists on his great theme unmoved and unaffected. We follow devoutly the voice of divine eloquence which resounds here, and we must give the apostle credit when he says, “hereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,” iii. 4.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

Paul was confined in captivity when he wrote this

epistle, i. 7—13, and in a city where were a common hall, i. 14, a house of Cæsar, and a Christian church, iv. 22. Hereupon one concludes that the epistle was composed during his captivity at Rome, and certainly during the first, as Paul expresses the hope of a speedy deliverance, i. 26.

The city of Philippi was one of the first towns of Macedonia ; its inhabitants consisted of Gentiles and some few Jews, who had converted Gentiles to their religion. This city was the first in Europe wherein Paul formed a Christian church. He came to this place on his second missionary journey, and first gained over, by a sermon which he preached, Lydia the seller of purple ; and when he was cast into prison, through his miraculous deliverance, he gained over even the jailor. On his third missionary journey he came hither again, probably the second time, Acts xx. 2, 6. The church of this city was well organized, it had bishops and deacons, i. 1, and the president thereof was a very eminent man and friend of the apostle, iv. 3. It was distinguished also from the other churches by this circumstance, that it supported the apostle by contributions, whereas he took wages from no other place but this, but supported himself, besides his preaching, by working with his hands. It had sent him money to Thessalonica, iv. 15, to Corinth, 2 Cor. xi. 8—9, and also to Rome during his captivity. This was carried to him by one of their teachers, Epaphroditus ; he accepted it particularly as a token of their love, and most gratefully acknowledged it, ii. 25 ; iv. 10. When Epaphroditus took ill with him, Paul took care of him with paternal affection, ii. 27, and sent him back with this epistle soon after his recovery, because he knew that the Philippians had heard of his illness, and were much troubled on account of it.

Our epistle was also written as an expression of thanks, at the same time it is such as the apostle only could write ; he gives, whilst he returns thanks, more than he had received : he warns the church of

dangers which brooded over it ; if, for the present, they were more happy than is the lot of other churches, he admonishes them, at the same time, to remain true to good fundamental principles, and in order to this, he wishes them celestial blessings.

In the introduction, i. 1—12, the apostle testifies his joy and sympathy on account of the state of the church at Philippi, he then gives a good account of his particular situation, and of the extension of the gospel, notwithstanding his bonds, and expresses the hope of a speedy deliverance, i. 13—26; he then admonishes and implores all to remember it was their sacred duty to walk worthy their high calling, i. 27—ii. 18. He then speaks of Timothy and Epaphroditus, both of whom he recommends as his messengers to them, ii. 19—30. After this he warns them against false brethren and seducers, sets himself before them as an example, recommends them to the righteousness by faith, and to honest striving after the heavenly treasure, iii. 1—21 ; to unity, to joy in the Lord, iv. 1—9; he thanks them cordially for their love, which had been expressed towards him, iv. 10, 18, and wishes for them the higher recompence which only cometh from God, 19—23.

Our epistle is not free from all allusion to division in the church, and to teachers of false doctrine. For as the church also at Philippi consisted of very different constituent parts in the persons who composed it, so seduction, through the agency of false teachers, was to be feared here also. Hence the stirring exhortation to unity, (ii. 1—4), which obviously appears to be the centre and fundamental idea of the epistle. The exhortations to humility appear to have been designed for the haughty Gentile Christians, ii. 5, whilst the references to self-condemnation, iii. 1—9, appear to have been directed to the Jewish false teachers. But as such misleading was to be viewed more in the light of threatening than as having really taken place, accordingly, the tone of the epistle is distinguished by seriousness,

but is far removed from condemnatory severeness. Whereas, in the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, we can discover two parts, the one doctrinal and the other hortatory, in our epistle, on the contrary, doctrine and precept are not so distinguished; for whereas, when viewed in their very foundations, they are one, so here they appear mutually entwined. The admonition to humility arises from the doctrine concerning the humiliation of Christ. When Paul compares his earlier and later life, so he comes from himself upon the doctrines of the works of law and justification. His description of the false teachers and their dismal prospects for the future, led him to treat concerning the sublime objects of the Christian hope. The exhortation to prayer and earnest striving, with fear and trembling, leads him to speak of the peace of God, which is of God, who worketh all true good in us. This epistle, though short, is notwithstanding charming. The apostle writes it to the Philippians as his most confidential friends, with all affection and openness; he lays before them his feelings and hopes; he feels happily at their prosperity, i. 3; he knows no higher satisfaction than that they should be made partakers of all good, ii. 2; he desires most ardently converse with them, i. 27; ii. 24, and wishes to see them after his example, ennobled. To him who had so often been treated with ingratitude, and whose honest intentions had been so often misunderstood, it must have been delightful to know there was one church at least which had not erred from the right path, and which had been held by him in his paternal heart, and truly in joy and sorrow. Hence this epistle is an honourable witness to the sentiments and steadfastness of the church. Chrysostom observes: That it is a great proof of the virtue of the Philippians, that they give no occasion to their teachers to chastise them, as the whole epistle contains no reproof, but only exhortation.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

This epistle was probably written during the imprisonment at Rome, iv. 3 and 15, at the same time with the Epistles to the Ephesians, Eph. vi. 22. Col. iv. 17, and to Philemon. Phil. ver. 10. Coloss. iv. 9.

Colosse was a middle rate city of Phrygia, inhabited mostly by Gentiles, perhaps also a few Jews. Paul, on his travels, passed several times through this country, Acts xvi. 6; xviii. 23. But had never come through this city, Col. ii. 1. Epaphras, a native of Colosse, iv. 12, and a sincere friend of Paul, had preached the gospel there, and formed a church, i. 7. To this Philemon and Archippus, Phil. ver. 1 and 2, may indeed have contributed. When Paul wrote this epistle, Epaphras was with him, iv. 12, and indeed as a fellow-prisoner, Phil. ver. 23; the latter had communicated the painful intelligence concerning this church, which occasioned the former to write, though he had not personal acquaintance there.

The seducers which appeared in this church were altogether of a peculiar kind, indeed, in many particulars they were like the false Jewish Christians, but in others they made peculiar pretensions. They desired circumcision, ii. 4, the celebration of the Jewish festivals, and the observance of the Mosaic laws relative to meats, ii. 16; according to a peculiar choice, and through a perverted human philosophy, of which they were proud, they had established a peculiar kind of divine service, consisting particularly in the worship of angels, ii. 18; they sought their honour in the greatest bodily mortification, and were departed from the foundation of the gospel, the steadfast hold in Christ as the head, ii. 19. From this it is obvious that these false teachers were of a different kind from those with which Paul hitherto had combated, particularly in the churches of Galatia. Thus the latter, entirely in the spirit and mode of thinking peculiar to the pharisees, urged to the observance of the ceremonial law as a divine institu-

tion: On the contrary, the former appear to have demanded a far more strict mode of living than the pharisees, and indeed, because of a secret doctrine which had been delivered to them, and which they felt themselves called upon to extend still more widely. That time was certainly rich in various efforts to place themselves in immediate connexion with the kingdom of spirits, in pretences to a secret wisdom, which they boasted to have received from angels, in endeavours, by mortification of the flesh, to raise themselves upward to a still higher perfection. In the second century of the Christian church, this direction manifested itself in the different philosophers among the Gnostic sects. But that even, in the apostle's time, the foundation had been laid, and that Judaism in particular had been infected by these views, is proved by the sect of the Essenes, as well as by the account of Simon Magus and Cerinthus. Indeed, the Essenes were distinguished by their strict mode of life, in a manner superior to the Pharisees and Sadducees, but, on the other hand, they fell away again into errors of another kind. The teachers of false doctrine among the Colossians appear not to have belonged just to the sect of Essenes, but to a sect of a similar kind. Neither Christian nor Jewish doctrine formed the basis of their system, but an oriental heathenish conception, that man could attain unto communion with the highest, through strict abstinence from all outward things, through continued fastings, through severe mortifications, not in a spiritual but carnal sense. In forming their system, they borrowed from Judaism so much as coincided with their views. The truth of Christianity, that the Son of God has come in the flesh, they admitted; but, far removed from that humility of mind which distinguishes Christians who are ever willing to learn, they preferred to form their views of this truth according to their pre-conceived opinions.

In a moral point of view, these false teachers were

not better than the pharisees. Boundless pride in their elevated perfection, and under-valuation of the merits of Christ, found place in them in yet greater measure, with an entire misunderstanding of the pure practical spirit which Christianity will promote. Whereas the pharisees erred in maintaining that a preparatory institution of divine origin should be always obligatory, the new teachers of error were much more in fault in setting forth institutions and opinions, all which were wanting in truth, by fruitless controversies, by useless investigations into matters whose knowledge is unattainable by mortals, and when attainable nevertheless would not be useful. On this account these views were fraught with danger to the Colossians. For, whereas, during the time the pharisees were imposing their ordinances on the plain Gentile Christians, the church had found no accord: so, on the other hand, the manner of thinking peculiar to the Phrygians was allied to fanaticism, as the sect of Montanus, which originated here, at a later period, proves. It was high time that Paul should lift up his voice earnestly against such delusive errors. He shows the Colossians that these persons proclaimed a wisdom which did not proceed from Christ, but from the world, and it is so far removed from the true wisdom which uniformly enlightens and improves, that rather it would only confound the conscience.

After the salutation, i. 1—2, the apostle expresses his joy at the faith of the Colossians, and describes besides the divine glory of Christ, which the seducers undervalued, i. 3—29, whilst he testifies his concern, hereupon he warns openly before them, as well against their specious wisdom as the burden they would impose on Christians, through the exact observance of the Mosaic law, whilst he remarks, that in Christ lie hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, at the same time, by his bloody death, he has freed us from the institutions of the law, ii. 1—23. Whosoever belong to him, must seek that which is

above, and though there would not be spread over them here such appearance of piety and wisdom as distinguished the Essenes, yet, at a future day, it would be manifest that such enjoy a spiritual life with Christ, iii. 1—5. The first part of the epistle, which contains doctrine, goes to this; the remaining portion contains exhortations to practice. And, first, the apostle admonishes to the practice of the Christian virtues in general, iii. 5—17, and then to the duties in particular relations, of the married, of parents and children, masters and servants, iii. 18—iv. 1, and concludes, after he had however commended himself to their prayers, with an account of himself, and salutations from his fellow-labourers, iv. 2—18.

As the epistle is one which had been written to a church not personally known to the apostle, so there is wanting here also, as in the Epistles to the Galatians and Hebrews, all personal allusion. On the other hand, it is full of the most important doctrine, in particular the deity of Christ. Luther has already observed there the greatest likeness with the Epistle to the Ephesians, in respect of the contents and manner of both epistles. The foundation of this consists, in part, in the similar wants of the churches, in part in the temper of mind of the apostle, who appears to have written the two epistles a short time after one another, and, indeed, the Epistle to the Colossians first.

THE TWO EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS.

These two epistles are the first which Paul wrote. A comparison of these with the Acts of the Apostles, enables us to conclude, without difficulty, the time and place of their composition. The first must have been written not long after the departure of the apostle from Thessalonica, and the latter not far from this city. Salonica, was, on account of its greatness, its riches, its flourishing commerce, one of the first cities of Macedonia; but the riches had

brought hither idleness, sumptuousness, and the immorality which is commonly associated with it. By far the larger portion of the inhabitants consisted of Gentiles, yet trade had allured many Jews also here. Paul came hither from Philippi on his second missionary journey, Acts xvii. 1, and, in a short period, had assembled a flourishing church, consisting more of Greeks than Jews. But this rapid success excited the enmity of the Jews, who raised a clamour which led to the speedy departure of the apostle. Full of concern for a church which had been scarcely founded, which was given over to the arbitrary treatment of enemies bent on persecution, he sent Timothy back to strengthen them at this trying period, and to gather intelligence of their state, 1 Thess. iii. 1. When he had finished his commission, and met the apostle again at Corinth, xviii. 5, the latter wrote the first epistle, 1 Thess. iii. 6. The intelligence brought by him was upon the whole good. The Thessalonians were indeed persecuted, but had remained faithful, ii. 14. On the other hand, there might have been some who had not renounced all the vices to which intercourse with the Gentiles, and their earlier mode of life had led; also the death of some lately converted persons had brought some to entertain the false opinion, that these, on the coming of the Lord, would be in a worse condition than such as would be then alive. In the assemblies of the church prophets came forth in whose discourses fanatical excitement appears to have been mingled, by which occasion was given to some to reject genuine inspiration together with the ungenueine, 1 v. 19.

Now the Apostle in these Epistles considers all these circumstances. First of all, he praises the Church for their steadfastness in faith, i. 1—10, he then calls to their remembrance his peculiar manner of life among them, ii. 1—12, he thanks God for the blessings of which, through him, they had been made partakers, ii. 13—16, testifies his ardent longing after them, ii. 17—iii. 5, and his joy at the news which had been

brought to him by Timothy, iii. 6—9, and prays God for them, iii. 10—13. On this he adds warnings against the sins of voluptuousness, idleness, against fraudulence in trade, which were particularly important for the Christians at Thessalonica, iv. 1—12, and grounds of consolation in respect of their deceased friends, who were by no means lost to them, and who would be raised again from the dead, on the future coming of the Lord, iv. 13—18; but we do not know when the Lord may come, and must always expect his coming, v. 1—10. The conclusion consists of certain general admonitions to the church and its overseers, and the benediction, v. 11—28. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written probably not long after the First, and from Corinth. We perceive when Paul composed this, he had the same companions as were with him when he wrote the first Epistle, 1 Thes. i. 1, and 2 Thes. i. 1;—and that the second Epistle repeats certain doctrines and admonitions of the first, confirms and explains them more, 1 Thess. iv. 11, and 2. Thess. iii. 10. 1 Thess. v. 1. 2. Thess. ii. 1.

The circumstances in the church were then yet the same. Whilst the Thessalonians continued to suffer many things from their enemies, they did not relax in faith, i. 7; also, a disorderly life had been led by many, iii. 11; and, from the passage in the first Epistle, wherein Paul tried to remove the wrong opinion which had been entertained respecting deceased friends; from this, certain persons falsely concluded that Paul designed to teach the coming of the Lord and end of the world were nigh. At the same time, also some persons wrested certain oral traditionary sayings of the Apostle, and some proceeded so far as even to say he had written a particular letter with the view of establishing this expectation, 2 ii. 2; iii. 17.

Now, in these Epistles, the Apostle assures the Thessalonians that they were certainly worthy of the kingdom of God, and that their persecutors exposed themselves to divine chastisement, i. 1—12.; but, at

the same time, he alleges that the day of the Lord is not so near as they believe, ii. 1—12;—he thanks God, and prays that they may be faithful, iii. 13—17;—he exhorts them to prayer, and, in particular, for himself, iv. 1—5; and warns them anew against their disorderly manner of life, iv. 6—15. After this follows the benediction, iv. 16—18.

Both Epistles show the tender sympathy and care of the Apostle, he expresses himself,—perhaps as they are his first letters,—far more copiously than any where besides. Their joy is his joy; in their troubles he even takes a share; he prays for them, and desires that they pray for him; he casts himself upon them, and yet more upon God himself, who would watch over them.

THE TWO EPISTLES TO TIMOTHY.

These two Epistles, together with the following to Titus, have been called pastoral Epistles, as they contain instruction relative to the oversight of the Church, and the administration of the ministerial charge.

Timothy is one of the most famous and distinguished companions of the Apostle Paul. The latter calls him his true son in the faith, 1 Tim. i. 2. 1 Cor. iv. 17. His brother, a servant of God, and helper in the gospel of Christ, 1 Thess. iii. 2;—a man entirely according to his mind, Phil. ii. 20. He was a native of Derbe, a city in Asia Minor, Acts xvi. 1. His mother and grandmother were pious Jewesses, but his father was a Greek, who had, probably, embraced Judaism. Already, in early youth, Timothy had been instructed, by his mother, in the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, 2 Tim. iii. 14. The two also embraced Christianity after that Paul was, for the first time, in that region; and, when he came there a second time, Timothy was very warmly recommended to him by the Church, Acts xvi. 2. 1 Tim. i. 18. He took him thence

with him as an assistant, after he had inaugurated by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, 1 Tim. iv. 14. From that time Timothy remained the companion of the Apostle, and only left him then, when, by a commission from him, and in his name, he visited the new churches and organized them.

The Apostle wrote the first of these Epistles after he had been banished from Ephesus by a severe persecution, where he had sent back Timothy. The church there was not yet perfectly organized, and the hard task was laid on the yet young Timothy to give to this church, its bishops, (overseers), elders, and deacons. Under these circumstances, Paul wrote to him, partly for his own instruction, and partly thereby to avouch this young man to the other churches, as his authorised agent. On that account he sets forth many things to his praise and commendation. Besides, this epistle gives fewer intimations of the time when it was written than most of the other epistles of Paul. In consideration that our epistle supposes the Church as of long standing, in which many abuses had arisen,—and that the teachers of false doctrine, against which he warned here, were come first at a later period, newly the view has been expressed, Paul may have written this epistle first after his deliverance from the first Roman captivity, and the short visit at Ephesus. The following are the contents:—After the salutation the false teachers at Ephesus are described wholly in the manner as in the church at Colosse, i. 1—10. The apostle makes his warning of these the more affecting, that he has set himself in opposition to them, he praises the grace of God, and Jesus in him, i. 11—17; and he calls Timothy to imitation of him, i. 18—20; after this he gives particular ordinances for divine service, ii. 1—8; and remarks the qualifications they must possess to whom Timothy would confide the office of a bishop, iii. 1—7; and a deacon of the church, iii. 8—13. From iii. 14—iv. 16, particular admonitions follow, which refer mostly to Ti-

mothy himself, and warnings against the doctrines of the false Christians, which would forbid marriage, and introduce the laws relative to meats. Then follow instructions how Timothy should have demeaned himself to the aged and the young; in particular, to widows, v. 1—16, and towards the elders, 17—25. In fine, Christian servants also were admonished to serve their masters with fidelity and reverence, vi. 1—2; yet once the Apostle comes back again upon the subject of the false teachers, vi. 3—5, and therein he unites again particular warnings which had respect to Timothy himself, vi. 6—21.

In this Epistle, also, the paternal feeling and tender care of the Apostle are manifested. The description of suitable bishops, and deacons, and decent widows, is affecting and moving; that of the teachers of error, iv. 1—3; vi. 3—5, dissuasive, and calculated to excite disapproval of error. Particular precepts, which would appear unimportant had they come from another, win, from the manner in which the apostle treats them, and become of deep importance from the unexpected point of view under which he has represented them, ii. 2 and 9, and 12—15. iv. 4, 5; v. 22. In fine, our epistle has yet an entire peculiar adornment in certain excellent sayings which lie scattered through it, i. 5 and 15, 16 and 17; ii. 5, 6; iii. 16; iv. 8; vi. 6—8, and 11—13. The apostle wrote the Second Epistle when he was a prisoner, i. 16; ii. 9, was forsaken of many of his friends, iv. 10, and had escaped a hard trial, iv. 16; and he anticipated his death as not far distant, iv. 6. False friends, who had betrayed him, affected him deeply, i. 15; ii. 17. The harsh opposition of open enemies, iv. 14, and the prospect that persons yet more evil were to come, iii. 2—8; but, with grateful emotion, he recollects the many kindnesses which had been done to him amid his sufferings, i. 16; and in this epistle he particularly entreats Timothy to come to him. These accounts and entreaties, together with particular admonitions, form the substance of the

epistle ; but they stand, as usual, in short familiar epistles, without precise order betwixt each other.

The Apostle, after the salutation, i. 1—2, testifies his joyful remembrance of Timothy, i. 3—5, admonishes him to a faithful discharge of his office, vi. 10, and sets himself forth as an example, i. 11—14. After this follow some accounts of false and true friends, 15—18, to which he joins an admonition to fidelity in the combat, ii. 1—13. These things must Timothy lay affectionately before those Christians who had given themselves over to vain investigations and vain babblings. ii. 14—26. Then are described again the false teachers, who would insinuate themselves into the Church ; and over against them are set the good features, in the person of Paul and Timothy, iii. 1—17. Yet, once again, Paul repeats the admonition to faithfulness ; and, indeed, on the ground he would soon have finished his course, and could no longer work, iv. 1—8. Here then follows the entreaty to come soon to him, and an account of his personal circumstances, 9—18 ; next to this are salutations and the benediction, 19—23.

This Epistle must commend itself to us, as it was written probably not long before the death of the apostle. At least he considers his course as concluded, and looks back with composure on his life and actions, iv. 7. Though then the danger of his situation was greater than it had ever been, he places his trust in God, iv. 18, and looks forward with delight to the crown of righteousness. He feels consolation that he suffers in affection to Jesus, and the elect, ii. 9—10, and rejoices that all who suffer with him would also reign with him, ii. 12. He feels himself, indeed, in chains, but the Word of God is not bound, ii. 9, evil men would wax worse, iii. 13. Paul, on the other hand, commits himself to the candour of his friends, particularly of Timothy ; and yet more to the good foundation upon which the pure doctrine rests, iii. 14, he expresses very strikingly the

disposition of the Apostle on the view of his martyrdom ; his tender care for his friends, his more settled courage, his cheerfulness, his solicitude for the matter of the Gospel, which he must leave surrounded with many dangers from within and without ; his apprehension, namely, on account of the adulterations, attempts at which he must already have experienced, and his confidence that the Head of the Church would, indeed, approve himself against the artifices of deceit. Certain it is, that every one who has read this Epistle through attentively, must have felt affected by these sentiments, as Paul, in a depraved sinful world, has fulfilled his difficult employment amid many real afflictions, so shall every Christian show a like faithfulness, employ a like labour, and then, when dying, be able to look back, peaceful as Paul, on the good fight, the finished work.

THE EPISTLE TO TITUS.

Concerning the personal circumstances of Titus we know only a few things from the Epistle of Paul, as he has not been named in the Acts of the Apostles. He was, by birth, a Gentile, and, after his conversion, accompanied the Apostle in his third missionary journey to Jerusalem, where he obtained the favourable decree for the reception of the Gentiles into Christianity, and hence he did not permit Titus to be circumcised, Gal ii. 1—3 ; at a later period Paul sent him several times to Corinth, 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13 ; viii. 17, and Dalmatia, 2 Tim. iv. 10.

At the time when this Epistle was written, Paul had left him at Crete, which he even had visited, i. 5. As the Acts of the Apostles, which proceeds to the second year of the first captivity at Rome, does not contain any thing of this or of the wintering at Nicopolis, as mentioned in this Epistle, iii. 12, so it is apprehended, with great probability, that our Epistle coincides with the period after the first imprisonment. Its purport is almost the same as that of the first

Epistle to Timothy; for they both had a similar design and occasion. As Timothy was to regulate the church at Ephesus, so he was to set in order that at Crete, to give them elders and deacons, and even to superintend it; Titus, like Timothy, had to contend with teachers of false doctrine; in fine, as he had to contend with persons of the same character as Timothy, so it became Titus to lay this letter before the Church as his credentials from the Apostle.

Hence, after the salutation, Paul describes, i. 1—4, the qualities of a proper bishop, v. 9, and warns, on the occasion, against the teachers of false doctrine, x. 16. Frank admonitions follow to the aged and young, to women and servants, ii. 1—10. It becomes the Christian to do honour to the gospel by adorning it, 11—15. He then recommended obedience to magistrates, and gentleness to all men, even when they have committed trespasses against us, iii. 1—8. After all these follow warnings against the teachers of false doctrine, 8—11, particular advices and a charge, together with the benediction, 12—15.

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.

Philemon was a man of consequence, a convert of Paul, and a Christian of Colosse, (verse 19,) in whose house the Christians there had assembled, v. 2. He was remarkable for the many good deeds he had done the Christians, especially such as were travelling, 5—7, so that Paul even bespeaks a lodging for himself with him, ver. 22. One of his slaves, Onesimus, had ran away from him and come to Rome, where he became acquainted with Paul the prisoner, and was soon converted by him, ver. 10. Paul felt much love to him, ver. 11, but he felt it his duty to send him back again to his master, and gave him this letter with him, in which he craves pardon for him and a reception, and, besides, recommends him, ver. 17, and then implores him, on the ground of their mutual love and ancient friendship, for a good reception to

Onesimus, for whose amendment he will stand responsible, ver. 8—21 ; after this follow a commission and salutation, with the benediction.

This Epistle shews us anew with what affection and apostolic dignity Paul treats subjects seemingly unimportant, and how he knows to set forth all matters in a touching way wholly peculiar to himself. He entreats Philemon, though he could have commanded him, and he entreats so earnestly, that his entreaties could not have been refused ; he shows his attachment for real friends, and lays before us an instance of it, his testimony of a Philemon and an Onesimus, alike full of honour. Luther well observes, “ Even as Christ has done for us with God the Father, the mild Paul does in like manner for Onesimus with Philemon. For Christ also, by his privilege, hath repaired to the father, and overpowered the father by love and humility. For we all are his Onesimus, just as we believe.

THE TWO EPISTLES OF PETER.

Who does not know the name of Peter ? he is the disciple respecting which the gospels narrate to us the most, and him Jesus distinguished by peculiar marks of his confidence. He was the son of Jonah, a fisherman, Matth. xvi. 17. Bethsaida his birth-place, John i. 44, and he was by occupation a fisherman. Jesus called him, together with Andrew his brother, to be his disciples, whilst they were fishing, Matth. iv. 18, and gave him the name which signifies Rock, to betoken his steadfastness, as before he had been called Simon. Jesus gave him his particular favour and confidence, together with James and John. In the list of the Apostles, his name has been usually the first. After the ascension he imparted the first intelligence of the event to the rest ; by his discourse on the day of Pentecost, he converted a great number, together with John he taught even in the temple, and defended himself before the high

council. He also took the first Gentile into the church, Cornelius of Cæsarea, the Centurion, Acts, chap. x. and xi. When already Herod Agrippa had caused him to be seized, with the view, by his death, of appeasing the exasperated people, he was delivered by a miracle from captivity, Acts xii. After a division of labour was arranged between him and Paul, his province, along with the other apostles, was to labour among the Jews, whilst Paul was to go to the Gentiles, Gal. ii. 7. Nevertheless, at the assembly of Apostles at Jerusalem, he spoke very warmly in favour of the Gentiles. Respecting the latter circumstances of his life, we know only from the sacred Scriptures that he had afterwards come to Babylon, 1 Peter v. 13. According to the account, by the oldest ecclesiastical writers, he had resided last at Rome, where he was crucified under Nero. He manifests, in his character, a certain quickness and hastiness, which often urged him to unguarded sayings, and for which Jesus frequently reproved him, Matth. xvi. 20. John xiii. 6—10, occasionally he allowed him to pass, as he knew he always intended well, Luke viii. 35. Matth. xix. 27. He was full of zeal for the honour of his master, this impelled and animated him, and when also, at the beginning, he was led by this to rash words and actions, yet the good foundation thoroughly pervaded him, and often excited him to the noblest deeds of devotedness and resignation. The same quickness of soul manifests itself in the desire wherewith he attends on the teaching of Jesus, he asks for explanation, and where he speaks in the name of the other apostles, Matth. xv. 15. Luke xii. 41. Matth. xviii. 21. John vi. 68; xxi. 21, and in the zeal with which he first preached the word after the departure of Jesus. To be sure, he denied Jesus in a weak hour of the night, in which his spirit was more deeply affected by temptation to the fear of man—but who is conscious of having been always free from sin?—he fell; but this denial was

soon followed by repentance, and the delicacy with which Jesus reproved him, and demanded of his disciple still greater zeal, John xxi. 1—7, had only the effect that he was henceforth unflinching in the avowal of Christ before the world, just as Paul, through the consciousness of his former wrong conduct, was inflamed to peculiar zeal.

As he had resolved to labour among the Jews, accordingly his discourses are full of references upon the Old Testament. The many discourses from him, which are set forth in the first part of the Acts of the Apostles, have a certain dignity and elevation, which, indeed, is of another kind than that which distinguishes John and Paul, but which does not interest less. They are distinguished throughout by their fire, their power, their conciseness, combined with a more than ordinary fulness of thought. It has often been observed, that the epistles, as they were written in his old age, are softer and milder than the discourses; but when Peter blames and threatens, (2 Peter ii.), he manifests the same power and fiery zeal which were peculiar to him. The two epistles are full of Christ, whom the apostle sets before him on every occasion as his pattern, and they contain partly remembrances of his life, and the power of his death full of blessings, partly references as to the sureness of his coming. The first Epistle, according to v. 13, was written from Babylon, which was even then a city of some note, from the many Jews who dwelt there. We do not possess the slightest evidence to determine the time when it was composed, we cannot, however, place it very early. For the admonitions of this epistle suppose that the gospel had been long known to the readers of the epistle, and that, as a church, they were well organized, and had elders, v. 1. Also, as the epistle is dedicated to the Jewish Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia, so the earliest supposed date can be given after, and perhaps long after, the second missionary travels of Paul, when he

founded these churches. What caused Peter to write, who was not personally known in those regions, we do not know. Only it is probable, that the Jewish Christians there had applied to him orally or by delegates, as some manifested a want of confidence in the doctrine of Paul. Perhaps they gave him accounts of the teachers of false doctrine, who endeavoured to wrest the doctrine of Paul. We can discover a reference to these false teachers at the second Epistle of Peter, which warns against them, 2 ii. 1, but iii. 15, confirms the manner of teaching which distinguished Paul. We know from the epistles which Paul wrote in these regions, *ex. gr.* that to the Galatians and Colossians, that the Jewish and Gentile Christians did not stand on the best terms with each other, and whereas Paul had written to the latter, so Peter addresses the former. They both co-operate to promote unity and sound doctrine, and on this account Peter declares, 1 v. 12, that the design of his epistle was to testify that it is the true grace of God wherein they stand. This declaration was the more necessary as some tender consciences may have been made to err, through the objections often repeated, he who had preached the gospel in those regions, falsified the pure doctrine of Christ, and placed himself in full contradiction to the other apostles, and the more to remove every wrong impression, he sent the epistle by the hand of Sylvanus, a man who had heretofore been an attendant on Paul, and who had now joined himself to Peter, as Paul was probably at this time a prisoner. Sylvanus should now testify also by word of mouth, that happiness, and the enjoyment of the kingdom of God, stand intimately connected with faith, as it had been announced to them from the beginning.

At the same time, another yet rather subordinate object is obvious in the epistles. Already the Christians had turned upon themselves the dangerous attention of the heathen, and who had testified their hatred by the persecutions which broke out every

where since the days of Nero. Under these circumstances, it was necessary the Christians should be exhorted to steadfastness in time of danger, and to a conversation through which they could contradict the false clamours against them, and the bitter rumours against Christianity. Now this also Peter does, whilst he represents trouble as having a tendency to render pure the true faith, and as a medium for attaining a likeness to Christ, who also had suffered so much for us. The true home of the Christian is, indeed, first only in a better world.

The substance of the First Epistle consists in the following particulars:—after the salutation, i. 1, 2, the apostle describes the happiness of the Christian, i. 3—12, and admonishes to a corresponding walk, i. 13.—ii. 10, particularly obedience to magistrates, ii. 11—17, which gives occasion to treat on the duty of servants, of which Jesus also had given the example, ii. 18—25. After this follow the duties of the married, iii. 1—7. Then were recommended unity and meekness, and these are enforced by the example of Christ, iii. 8.—iv. 11. In like manner patience under the affliction of this time, iv. 12—19; finally, the apostle admonishes the elders to faithfulness, and the joyful discharge of the duties of their office, v. 1—4, and it concludes with general precepts and benedictions, v. 5—14.

The Second Epistle has, indeed, no precise superscription, but according to iii. 1, it was addressed to the same churches as the first. Peter was now old, and saw his end approaching, iii. 13, but he would labour so long as health continued. After the salutation, i. 1, 2, the apostle admonishes to make their calling and election sure, through the cultivation of the Christian virtues, i. 3—11, and says that he would urge them the more to faith, as he knew, by intimation from Jesus, that his death was not distant. As means of confirming them, he refers to the transfiguration, of which he had been a witness, and the prophecies of the Old Testament, i. 12—21. Hereupon follows a warning

against the ungodly and guilty teachers of false doctrine, whose sure judgment would not linger, ii. 1—22. The Lord would come though he may be little expected, so surely as formerly the deluge, iii. 1—16. The epistle concludes with admonishing to keep the mind fixed on this period, and benediction, 17—18.

The false teachers which Peter has described are entirely of another kind from those with which Paul had to contend. These denied the Lord, ii. 1, lived in licentiousness, and defied their superiors, ii. 10, and 14, 15, 18; were covetous, 14; and allured the people by promises of freedom to them, ii. 19. Jude also has spoken of them in his epistle, and thereby has a likeness to what John says of them in the Revelation, ii. 14. In the latter place, the expression was, they followed after the way of Balaam; this explained, they taught to eat meats offered to idols, and to commit whoredom. Now, we know from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, that matters of this kind took place among the Christians from paganism; and as Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, had to contend with teachers from the Jewish Christians, so Peter, the Apostle of the Jews, John and Jude, against the false teachers from the Gentile Christians. Probably the latter arose at that time, or were become more prominent, as Paul was then in prison, and could not in person put them to silence—indeed the chapter in which Peter has spoken against them, in this particular coincides most exactly with the Epistle of Jude, not only in thought but in expression.

THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN.

In the remarks on John's Gospel, we have already treated on circumstances respecting his life, and the peculiar attraction of his writings. Out of the three charming epistles which we have from him, the same spirit breathes as we meet in his gospel. The resemblance between them in thought and expression, is striking; they are all over distinguished by the same

principal topics, the same copiousness, tenderness, and peacefulness; they manifest the same childlike conception, almost the same words, so that whosoever has the art of discerning the spirits, must feel at once that John only could have been the author. There are two matters which John constantly repeats, and insists on again and again. Faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and love one to another, as he also has even declared, i. 3—23, “ This is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ, and have love one to another.”

The First Epistle.—Concerning the time in which, the place at which, and the readers for which, this Epistle was written, we find in itself no trace. Nevertheless we cannot be long doubtful on these particulars. The Epistle must have been written after the Gospel, as he refers to it, i. 1—3, and ii. 14, and in his old age. As John resided at Ephesus during the three last years of his life, accordingly by this is given the place of its composition; and as he was then occupied with the concerns of the churches of Asia Minor, from these causes accordingly we cannot be in doubt as to the first readers of it. The Revelation, which was written perhaps twenty years earlier, was directed to the seven churches of this region; but then John might have stood in connection with more churches.

Even in the three first verses, John has given a brief summary of his Gospel, in which, besides, he reminds them, and remarks he preached what he had seen and heard. Now this has not been illustrated in any way in the Epistle. On this account, can we forbid the thought, that John might have imparted his Epistle as a letter with his Gospel, in which he had applied the truths which had been stated there, and after he had painted Jesus to the eye, he had now also demanded to fellowship with him? What has been remarked above, respecting the relation of his Gospel and these Epistles, is confirmed by the nature of our Epistle. It contains no address at the begin-

ning, as almost all the other epistles besides, and even the two epistles of John have, neither has it any salutation at the end, so that it more resembles a treatise than a letter. The design of John to refute false doctrines concerning the person of Christ, and which he put forth in his Gospel, appears here still more plainly. The heretics which John here opposes must be recognised as of three kinds. Some denied the divine dignity of Jesus, and declared him not to be Christ the Son of God. These the apostle calls deceivers and false Christians, and declares that he who hath not the Son cannot have the Father, and declares faith on Jesus as Christ is essential, ii. 22; iv. 15; v. 1. Whether these, with the sect called Ebionites, held Jesus to be only a man, or belonged to the disciples of John the Baptist, we cannot pronounce positively. That they belonged to the latter is the more likely, as their view has been opposed in the gospel, besides the passage John v. 16, appears to have been directed against them. Another party denied, not indeed the divine dignity of Jesus, but they maintained he had not a body; they entertained the notion that higher beings than men manifested themselves only in the semblance of human bodies, (Tob. xii. 19,) in as much as a real body would have been unworthy of them. This view was directly against the whole of the apostolical doctrine; for it not only contradicted the real fellowship of Jesus with men, Heb. ii. 16; iv. 15, but denied at the same time the reality of the death of Jesus, and its rich blessings for men. On this account John contradicts this doctrine so strongly, iv. 3, and declares that he had felt with his hand the body of Jesus, i. 1. Now, whilst John contradicts the two kinds of heretics, he maintains against the former the true deity. Against the latter the real humanity of Christ, and thereby sets forth a full testimony for the person of Christ. That in the manifestation of Jesus, the divine and human are inseparably united, that the source of the divine life has manifested himself in hu-

man nature, and has been made communicable to men. These John considered the very centre of Christianity. Communion with God through Jesus, who is the incarnate Son of God, is that which he has declared in his gospel and epistles. In this living consciousness he writes with zeal against these persons who attacked this fundamental truth, and shows that they who doubted the deity of Jesus, conceded the truth of history, and that they who had fallen into the weak speculations concerning the Word, rejected his appearance as a man among men contrary to the testimony of history. Perhaps there were even heretics who held the most destructive views on the subject of morals; they believed it is enough to worship God with the spirit, and that it is proper to allow to the body all possible indulgence. Now John teaches that all men really are sinners, i. 8, that every sin is a real transgression, iii. 4, that fellowship with God sanctifies and purifies the Christian, iii. 9, and that by this only could any be recognized as real Christians; he only who does not any longer serve sin, hath a portion in God, but he who continues to indulge in sin has thereby manifested he is not of God, iii. 8—10. On this account he has repeated so often, whereby only we can know whether we have fellowship with God, ii. 5; iii. 10 and 24; iv. 13; v. 11.

Upon a first view, our epistle appears without all connection and arrangement, and to have been written only as the effusion of an excited heart. A more attentive observation of it, however, manifests it has a more exact and beautiful connection. It consists of the following particulars:—

The introduction, which contains a reference to the gospel, i. 1—4.

- I. A description of the marks by which the readers may know whether they are true Christians, i. 5—iii. 24.
 - a) Fellowship one with another, i. 5—ii. 17.
 - b) Avoidance of antichristian views, ii. 18—28.
 - c) A constant endeavour to be free from sin, ii. 29—iii. 24.

II. A description of the marks, in the possession of which, teachers and their regulations may be recognized as truly Christian, iv. 1—5, 13.

a) An acknowledgment of Christ as the Son of God incarnate, iv. 1—6.

b) The doctrine and manifestation of love, iv. 7—v. 5.

c) Possession of the spirit, v. 6—13.

Also in the second, as in the first Epistle, the name of John has not been given. The author of each is recognised as the elder. The presbyters, or elders, they called bishops of the Church: Their province was to conduct the instruction, and to watch over the morals of the members of the Church. In this department John was occupied at Ephesus. We do not know why he has not named himself an apostle, perhaps from modesty; yet Peter also has given himself the name of elder, 1 Peter v. 1. The resemblance, in contents, between this and the first Epistle, makes it probable that the two were written nearly at the same time. The epistle is directed to a pious woman, with whose God-fearing children John had been acquainted, v. 4; and it contains, besides, admonitions to love, warnings against the heretics who had been already described in the first Epistle, and whose speedy coming was there spoken of. The prohibition of converse with the heretics is continued here yet more earnestly than in the first Epistle. They must have been particularly dangerous in that country.

The third Epistle, like the second, is a mere private letter, to a certain Gaius. Here, also, John names himself the elder. He praises him because he had received and treated kindly certain travelling Christians, who had given him honourable testimony to his hospitable disposition. Besides, John complains of the president of the church in which Gaius was a member, and whose name was Diotrephes, that he had not received the Christians, and had not even regarded the letter of recommendation that was given

by him, and he threatens that when he would come he would take particular notice of that matter.

On reading these Epistles, and particularly the latter, who has not thought upon the Epistle of Paul to Philemon? From it we learn the apostles impressed their apostolic dignity even on their private letters, and that even on ordinary subjects, they wrote with a spiritual savour which distinguishes their epistles from all others.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

This important, and in many respects remarkable Epistle, has not given us the name of its author. But, like the first Epistle of John, it begins without salutation, or any benediction, yet it is not wanting in intimations of its author. It describes the Jewish temple services in a way and manner by which we see that Jerusalem and the temple were then yet standing. It contains news respecting Timothy, who was the trusty friend of Paul, at xiii. 23. The views it sets before us, and the principles of illustration, for the most part, in substance, coincide altogether with the other epistles of Paul. The small differences which we perceive, have their foundation in this, that many truths which in the other epistles have been given only concisely, have been set forth there copiously and exactly. On these grounds it has been usually held that Paul was its author, and with this many ancient as well as modern writers agree in opinion, though some others judge differently.

Our Epistle leaves us in darkness on many particulars. When and where was it written? At what time, and where was it composed? Who are the Hebrews to whom it was directed? Were they Jews, or Jewish Christians? and, when we espouse the latter view, which is far the most probable, where did they reside? Were they Jewish Christians in all countries, or in a particular country? And when we suppose the latter, which we must suppose, from xiii.

23, where then is that country? is it Palestine, as some early writers supposed, or Galatia, or Thessalonica? Our Epistle has not furnished an answer to these questions; its contents happily have. The most probable opinion is, that this Epistle was directed to the Jewish Christians at Galatia, and was sent together with the Epistle to Galatia, which latter had respect to Gentile Christians; accordingly, the apostle has not mentioned his name, as he had made himself known with sufficient plainness in this latter epistle.

This is the only epistle which Paul has written to the Jewish Christians only, and therein he has refuted their conceptions copiously and connectedly. They had embraced Christianity, but were greatly wedded to their religion, particularly to the outward religious service in the temple at Jerusalem. In their opinion the new religion was not sufficiently splendid, nor distinguished by outward gorgeousness; and, besides, they believed they were not justified in giving up the Jewish high priest, the sacrifices, and the laws relating to meats, which also had been ordained of God. They beheld, with unmingled disapproval, that whilst the heathen were baptized into Christ, they were not bound, at the same time, to the observance of the ceremonial law of Moses. Though they had been baptized as well as the Gentile converts, notwithstanding they did not look upon themselves as formed into a new church, they even considered themselves only as a Jewish sect, which differed from other Jews only in this, that they acknowledged in Jesus the Messiah, whilst other Jews expected him to come at a later period. On this ground the observance of the Mosaic law appeared to them necessary to salvation. Yea, many of them appear even to have been in danger of falling away from Christianity, vi. 4—6; x. 25. Now, against all these the apostle writes. He concedes to them that the Mosaic law had a divine origin, and that it had been a splendid religion, and much addressed to the outward senses; but he proves to them, at the same time, that Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant, and that all things by

him are far more perfect than by Moses; he is a higher teacher, better high priest, a more efficient sacrifice than Judaism could give; Judaism was appointed by God only for a state of childhood, only as a preparation for a more spiritual religion. Now the time had come when justification by faith was to be preached. Our epistle, like most of Paul's other epistles, has two parts, a doctrinal, i. 1—x. 19; and a hortatory, x. 20; xiii. 20.

- I. In the doctrinal part has been shown the superiority of Christianity to Judaism, and indeed in a threefold manner.
- A) Jesus, the author of the new dispensation is, higher than the angels, by whom the old was ratified, i. ii.
 - B) Jesus is worthy of higher honour than the mediator of the old covenant, Moses, iii.—iv. 13.
 - C) Jesus is far higher and more perfect than the high priest of the old dispensation, iv. 14—x. 19. This truth, which for the readers of this Epistle was of particular importance, Paul explains so particularly, that on each point of comparison he proves partly the resemblance and partly the higher dignity of Jesus.
 - a) The high priest, to make expiation for men, must be a man, v. 1—2. On this account also, Jesus was a man, and is his brother in all respects, like him even in death, iv. 14—x. 19, compare with also ii. 11, and ii. 17—18. But Jesus is a higher priest than the earlier priests who had a sinful and weak nature, v. 3, but he is holy, vii. 26—28, and powerful, viii. 1, whereas they are many, vii. 23, but he only is one and eternal, vii. 24.
 - b) The high priest does not appoint himself, but was chosen by God, v. 4, so also Jesus, v. 5. Yet after a higher order than the Levitical priests, vii. 15.
 - c) The high priest had to offer sacrifices, viii. 3, in like manner Jesus, v. 7, but the former offered only animals which sufficed to outward pu-

rification, ix. 13, and often, as his sacrifice did not suffice, ix. 25 ; x. 2 and 11, but the latter offered even himself, and in order to inward purification, ix. 14, and but once, as it sufficeth for ever, ix. 26 ; x. 14.

- d) The high priest appears before God, in like manner Jesus, ix. 7. But the former only once a year and in the Holy of Holies, ix. 7, but Jesus has for ever entered into heaven, vi. 20 ; ix. 11 and 12 and 24.
- e) The high priest mediates a covenant between God and men, viii. 6, in like manner Jesus also; but a higher covenant which has far better promises, vii. 22 ; viii. 6 ; ix. 15.

II. Now, in the hortatory-part, x. 19—xiii. 25. Paul requires of them a walk conformable to their new religion, x. 19—39, and places before them from the Old Testament history, the example of heroes of the faith, whom his readers should set before them as ensamples, xi. 1—40, but Christ should be considered as the noblest of examples, xii. 1—11. Upon this he forms a warning against apostacy, and this again affords opportunity to remind them of the high pre-eminence of Christianity, xii. 12—29. At last there follow general exhortations to love, compassion, chastity, hospitality, contentment, conduct towards teachers, steadfastness in faith, intercession, and then it closes with benediction, xiii. 1—25.

For us this Epistle is important, as it also teaches us, that the dealings of God with the people of Israel should be viewed as a preparatory institution, and that many portions of the Jewish law were symbolical of somewhat higher. But it has become still more important for us, because of its copious description of the high dignity of Jesus, and his relation towards mankind so rich in blessings. The exact comparison with the Jewish divine service, which has been carried out there even to minute particulars, must impress on the most unlearned, when he has read the Epistle with attention, an exact and clear knowledge

of the high measure of blessing for which he is indebted to Jesus.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES.

The evangelical history recognizes many by the name of James. James the son of Zebedee and brother of John, cannot indeed have written our Epistle, as he was very early put to death, Acts xii. 2. Far more distinguished than he, was another James, who bears also the name brother of the Lord, Gal. i. 19. He, John, and Peter, were reckoned pillars in the church, Gal. ii. 9, and on occasion of the deliberation as to the obligation of the ceremonial law on Christians, he was the proposer of the wise determination which emanated from that meeting, Acts xv. 13. Also, when Paul came the last time to Jerusalem, he met with this James as president of that Church, and was affectionately received by him, Acts xxi. 18. James might have deserved this particularly by his pious and circumspect guidance of the mother Church at Jerusalem. He was entirely the man for this Church, an enlightened pattern of piety, who had gained over thousands of Israelites, full of circumspection to avert the storms which brake in from without, and to settle the disturbance within the Church, to which the question as to the obligation of the ceremonial law on the Gentile Christians gave rise, he was calm, circumspect, firm, wise to guide minds in difficult circumstances, and could point out the right course, and teach with more convincing discourse, keen and forbearing as circumstances rendered necessary. The expression "brother of the Lord," can well signify, according to the usages of language, relation of the Lord. Our James then is the son of Alpheus or Cleopas, and the Mary who was sister of Mary the mother of Jesus. In the Gospels and Acts, he is distinguished from James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John, by the surname, the Less. After a very long and useful life he received the

crown of martyrdom, when the high priest Ananus caused him to be put to death.

Still less probable is the opinion of those who distinguish James, the son of Alphaeus, the brother of the Lord, from the Apostle James, and suppose the former author of our Epistle.

James was in favour with the Jewish Christians in other lands, and they had more confidence in him than on Paul, as they conceived he was against the abolition of the Mosaic law. Hence it is natural that James should have written an Epistle to these, for to them only it was directed, as the superscription manifests. Whether this Epistle was written to accomplish a particular design, or with a positive reference to particular countries, we cannot determine. That it was written at rather a late period, we infer from the circumstance, that there has been corrected therein a misunderstanding which arose respecting the doctrine of Paul. As James abode at Jerusalem, so there can be no doubt as to the place of its composition. This Epistle contains no system of faith, but throughout ethics, and truly so noble and pure, that it is in the highest degree worthy its apostolic origin. At a more early period an unfavourable opinion prevailed against it, as some believed it contradicts the doctrine of justification, as Paul had represented it. According to the latter, the Christian attains unto salvation not through works, but through faith, however a right faith of itself produceth works. This Paul illustrates by many examples, particularly by that of Abraham, Rom. iv. 3, and of Rahab, Heb. xi. 31. On the contrary, James teaches, ii. 14—26, that not faith, but works make happy, and he uses the same examples, Abraham and Rahab, to prove his position. Here now, indeed, is apparently a complete contradiction, but on a more exact examination it immediately evanishes. It rests, namely, on the word faith, and this word is applied by both in different acceptations. Paul comprehends under it a living faith, active by love, Gal. v. 6; but James

uses the word in its bare acceptation; accordingly, he says it is somewhat which even the devil has, the devils, also, have this faith, James ii. 19. Only the former kind can make happy, the latter, naturally, can not. Paul places the righteousness by faith, and the righteousness through the observance of the law against one another; but James, the bare knowledge of the Gospel and the observance thereof. Accordingly, Paul has stated what is right, and James also, in the substantial truth as set forth by both. There is no contradiction, it consists in the word only. It is not improbable that the doctrine of Paul was so wrested by many, that they maintained an outward acknowledgment of Christianity only is necessary, but a moral obedience is not necessary. They satisfied themselves with a bare outward faith, as James describes it, and against these delinquents, not against Paul, the Epistle is directed. On the subject of the persons against which James directed his argument, there is another still more probable view, according to it James contends, here, not with Gentile Christians, nor with perverters of the doctrine of Paul, but against a false direction of opinion, which originated even within the Jewish Christian Churches. As it consisted in the spirit of Pharisaic Judaism to mistake the essence of religion in its appearance,—the genuine worship of God in mere outward ceremonies,—the true divine wisdom in a miserable knowledge of the law, so could even many Jewish Christians, whose manner of conception was not wholly pervaded by the Gospel, confound a dead faith with a living. Whereas, at an earlier period, they had plumed themselves, before the Gentiles, on their works of law, so now, on the other hand, they might pride themselves on their faith, while it might have contributed but little to their moral amelioration. The following are the contents of this Epistle:—First, The Apostle admonishes to patience under persecution, to prayer, to contentment with their poverty, because the rich had suffered much under the dis-

troubling circumstances of the time, i. 1—12; he testifies that the good is only from God, but the evil cometh from men themselves, i. 13—20, he admonishes to a walk conformable to the Gospel, i. 21—27,—he warns against respect of persons, whilst the poor deserve as much honour as the rich, as people of the latter class contribute the most to the persecutions, ii. 1—13, and against a dead and unfruitful faith, 14—26; he recommends guardedness in the use of the tongue, as it is difficult to bridle the tongue, iii. 1—12. A meek spiritual walk pleasing to God, and he mentions, besides, the blessings connected therewith, iii. 13—iv. 12. He blames those who anticipate, with certainty, the uncertain future, as if all depended on themselves, and not on God, iv. 13—17; he threatens the rich, who had oppressed the Christians with a severe and near chastisement, v. 1—6, and, on the other hand, promises to the faithful a joyful future, v. 7—11. In fine, he gives certain general exhortations against profane swearing,—of behaviour towards the sick, and prayer for the conversion of such as had erred from the right path, v. 12—20.

When James speaks of Christ, out of modesty, he does not call him brother, but the Lord of Glory, ii. 1. He speaks much of the sufferings to which he was exposed by his residence in Jerusalem, and admonishes them to a patience such as he had manifested. One might say, this Epistle is written for the consolation of the poor and the humiliation of the rich, it is so rich in consolation to the one and in warnings to the other, ii. 2—4; iii. 2—12. An expositor of our Epistle says, “Who nobler than the man who speaks therein! How uninterruptedly submissive his patience under suffering? What elevation in poverty! joy in sorrow! What simplicity, pureness, fixedness, perfect confidence in prayer! No condition is more hostile than that which implies unbelief, than that of the narrow-minded, who measures all by his own little reason, the double-minded man! What access he had to God in prayer; he speaks of

the power, yea, miraculous power, in connexion with prayer, as the most certain and unfailing, indeed, as a matter, belief in which arises from an experience which rests on precise events and proofs; truly a man full of the Holy Ghost, a prayer, a disciple of Jesus."

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

Jude denotes himself, in the address, as a brother of James, when he distinguishes himself from the Apostles, ver. 17, it has been conjectured he was the brother of our Lord, according to the flesh, who is mentioned, Matth. xiii. 55. The Epistle is directed to the Jewish Christians in Palestine, to whom many of the allusions must have been better known than many of them are to us. The time of its composition was late, and took place the last year before the destruction of Jerusalem. A new kind of heretics was arisen. They considered Judaism as the work of limited spirits, and permitted themselves to tread upon the law with their feet. Jude describes them as people who denied God and Jesus,—gave themselves over to all manner of vice; they despised superiors, and circulated seditious doctrines. He speaks to them in strong language, and assures them of the ruin they were about to bring on themselves. All these features apply to the last times before the destruction of Jerusalem.

This whole Epistle has been written in the strong language of the ancient prophets, and is not less animated and fiery than 2 Peter, chap. ii., which has a resemblance to it. Origen, long since, has remarked, "Jude, also, has written an epistle, indeed, of small dimensions, but full of expressions which are full of celestial grace."

THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THIRD DIVISION.

THE REVELATION OF JOHN.

THIS book suitably terminates the grand whole of our sacred writings. As they had commenced from the beginning of all things, so now the last book opens a prospect to the end of all things. Yet once, but in a higher tone, the voice of the prophets resounds and unites in itself the essence of the Old and New Testaments.

Hence it also has happened that many who did not succeed with the illustration of this book, considered in the whole connexion, have been interested by the single images and expressions of it; and that, thereon, the desire increased to dive into the more profound parts. The seven epistles, which stand in this book by way of introduction, form, by universal acknowledgment, a useful mirror, in which the churches of all times may view themselves, to say no more. The great design of the book seems to be, to enliven faith in Jesus; who, though he died, yet liveth again;—who, though invisible to mortal eyes, rules mightily;—who, though having gone away, yet is coming again. With all the darkness which covers this sealed book of destiny,—under all the miseries when it is opened,—amidst all the plagues which will flow forth upon men, it bids us hope for the lion of the tribe of Judah, the conqueror. It describes the conflict of the devil and his kingdom with the kingdom of Christ. The vain strivings of the former through power and cunning. His destruction was early determined in Heaven, and then accomplished on earth. Only the word of God stands true, only steadfastness, truth, and righteous-

ness, in patience and good works, have borne the crown of victory, and what a crown! the crown of a royal priesthood,—participation in the glory of Christ.

The whole design of this book, to which it points from the beginning, is to describe the future coming of Christ, and his kingdom. The peculiar fundamental idea of the book is the development of the divine kingdom, amid all hinderances; its victory over all enemies, its completion through the coming again of Christ. That Christ would come again, and his reward with him, this was his own word on his departure, Acts, i. 6; Matt. x. 22; xvi. 27—28; xxvi. 64. This the constant assurance of his apostles, 1 Cor. xv. 51; Philipp. iv. 5; 1 Thess. iv. 15; James v. 7—9; 1 Peter i. 5; 1 John ii. 18. This the faith also of the first Christians, and, indeed, not a mere unnecessary secondary matter, but a principal, the ground and foundation of the whole faith. What is our faith on Christ when we do not venerate him living, hope in him, or fear him as coming again? The time and hour of his advent Jesus has declared none should know, Acts i. 7; Mark xiii. 32. But daily, hourly, yea, every moment, we should expect him. Centuries indeed have passed away, and he is not come, the declaration, however, must have its fulfilment, wherein it is said that he cometh at a time when not expected, as travail on a woman with child, like the servant who has not expected any longer the return of his master. But that believers have not been in error, notwithstanding the delay, appears from the fact, that the prophecy relative to the return of Christ to judgment is combined with another prophecy, the completion of which the contemporaries of Jesus lived to see, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem. Now, so surely as the latter has been fulfilled, so surely would the former not remain unfulfilled. As these now constitute the contents of our book, as has been plainly shown, what value it must have in the view of all to whom the coming of the Lord is dear, notwithstanding

the imperfect and piece-meal knowledge we have of it, yet it can console us in suffering,—animate us in the combat, strengthen faith, and, in pressing circumstances, infuse into the soul living and joyful hope. But, if this object be really attained, and Christians become formed to the state of servants, who expect every minute the coming of their master; so this prophecy, in its results, need not be pressed out to the remoteness of many centuries. Had the primitive Christians been able to calculate, out of the book of revelation, what we know, that so long a time would have been from the ascension of Christ to his return again: so they would have been, by this, much more slow in matters of faith and inactive in the matter of sanctification. Our ignorance as to the time is a direct efficacious medium which God has used to our improvement. The same divine wisdom which has made certain to us the matter of our death, but left unknown to us the hour, has so ordered these prophecies, that we have to expect, every moment, the coming of Christ, and for which there is an appointed day. Have now believers, in the centuries that have passed away, connected the coming of Christ with their time, this did not injure them, but awakened them much more to watchfulness,—to confidence, and steadfastness in the conflict. And though they were wrong in their calculations, yet we cannot say they were altogether wrong. For, though the truths of revelation serve for their time, yet, in part, at least, they refer not to that time only and exclusively; the Lord is always coming, and every struggle and every farther development of his kingdom is a type of the last struggles and the final consummation. Suppose the coming of the Lord, which they expected, is not the last, yet in essence it is not different from the last, but is a preparation and surety of it.

Notwithstanding all these circumstances, many centuries ago, the genuineness of this book was doubted; that is, the composition thereof was ascribed to

another, by the name of John. This doubt rested mainly on the remark of Jerome, who, while a defender of the book, has said that, in his time, namely, in the fourth century, the Greek Church had not acknowledged the Revelation the work of the Apostle John. This circumstance is so much the more remarkable, as in yet earlier times, with very few exceptions, have been recorded only favourable testimonies to the genuineness of this book, and as the book itself contains testimony that it is the work of John, i. 1 and 2, and 9. The unfavourable opinion of the Greek Church originated partly from a conflict this church had with a sect which, on the ground of this book, expected the millenium under the reign of Christ, would be a period of earthly and sensual enjoyment. It originated farther thence, when, after the time of Constantine, Christianity became triumphant, men desired much less a change in the present state of things; and, through the repose this change afforded, they became more indifferent to the time of the coming of the Messiah. But, at a later period, the Greek Church took this book into the collection of the sacred writings.

On no book of Scripture is a summary of contents so necessary as in this, which is all connected together most exactly; and which, amid all the variety of view it presents, is ever connected together by an unbroken chain.

Here follows such a summary in a few words:—

I. Introduction of the book.

Title, i. 1—3.

Dedication to the Seven Churches, together with a specification of its principal contents, 4—8; account of the origin of this book, 9—20.

II. Epistles dedicated to the Seven Churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicæa, ii.—iii.

III. A view of heaven, iv.

IV. The book sealed with seven seals, v.

- A. Opening of the first seal. Victory, vi. 1—2.
- B. Opening of the second seal. War, 3—4.
- C. Opening of the third seal. Famine, 5—6.
- D. Opening of the fourth seal. Pestilence and death, 7—8.
- E. Opening of the fifth seal, a promise of vengeance for the Christians who had been put to death, 9—11.
- F. Opening of the sixth seal. Terrible tokens of his coming, 12—17.

Before opening of the seventh seal, vii. 1—3, the friends of Jesus among the Jews, 4—8, and Gentiles, 9—10, were sealed, 11—17, that nothing should touch them.

- G. Opening of the seventh seal. Silence in heaven, viii. 1—2. Hearing the prayers of the faithful, 3—5. The seven trumpets, 6.
- A. The first trumpet. Hail and fire, 7.
- B. The second trumpet. A mountain falls into the sea, 8—9.
- C. The third trumpet. A star falls from heaven, 10—11.
- D. The fourth trumpet. Darkness of the sun and the moon, 12.

The three last trumpets betoken three woes, 13.

- E. The fifth trumpet. Destructive locusts, ix. 1—12.
- F. The sixth trumpet. Concerning the great river Euphrates, 13. 21.

Before the sounding of the seventh trumpet an angel declared as to the nearness of the consummation. The seven thunders, x. 1—7. John eats the little book, 8—11. He measures the temple, and observed that the essential part belonging to divine worship remained, and only the court, without the temple, should be given to the Gentiles, xi. 1—2. The two witnesses for the truth die at Jerusalem, 3—14.

G. The seventh trumpet.

Preliminary praise in heaven, 15—19. Signs of the woman and the dragon, xii. 1—6. War in heaven, 7—12. Persecution on earth, 13—17, by the first beast (oppressive power), xiii. 1—10. By the second (double dealing craft) 11—18.

Victory over the hostile power. A previous celebration of this in heaven, xiv. 1—6. The angel proclaims the fall of this enemy; the first bears the everlasting Gospel, 7; the second announces the fall of Babylon, 8; the third, the destruction of its reversers, 9—13. Others notify it by figurative representations, 14—20. The seven angels, with the seven vials of wrath, xv. 1—8.

a) First vial. Pestilence, xvi. 1—2.

b) Second vial. Blood, 3.

c) Third vial. Changing the rivers into blood, 4—7.

d) Fourth vial. Hotness of the sun, 8—9.

e) Fifth vial. The darkening of the kingdom, 10—11.

f) Sixth vial. The Euphrates is dried. The three unclean spirits, 12—16.

g) The seventh vial. An earthquake; division of the hostile city, 17—21. A more particular description of the enemy assembled to its overthrow, chap. xvii. Song of lamentation for the fall of the hostile city, xviii. Song of triumph in heaven, xix. 1—10. A triumphal march in heaven, 11—18.

Imprisonment of the two beasts, 19—21. The dragon was bound a thousand years, xx. 1—3.

The happiness of the redeemed for a thousand years, and the first resurrection, 4—6.

Gog and Magog, and their destruction, 7—10.

The second resurrection, and the judgment, 11—15.

A new heaven, and new earth. The New Jerusalem, xxi. xxii. 7.

A confirmation of all the preceding, 8—21.

From the remotest times these particulars have been explained in different ways, as it was natural that a prophetic book be obscure till its prophecies be fulfilled. As the book describes the conflict of Christ with Satan, and of the saints with the representatives of the latter, so the interpreters of every time have thought they must find the reality of these pictures in the persecutors and enemies of their time, and on that account have expected in their day the speedy conclusion of earthly things. The primitive Christians, under the persecution of the Roman empire, considered the Roman Cæsar Antichrist. They who lived when the Arabs inflicted terrible grievances on the Christians recognized Mahomet under this character. At a later period, Pope Lewis XIV.; and last of all, the hero of the French Revolution. The same variety of interpretation has been manifested on the number of the beast 666 (xiii. 18.) As in all ancient languages letters are signs also of numbers, so men have sought a solution of it in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and have found it in the various names, Simeon the prince, the leader of the rebels in Jerusalem; Latinus, the surname of Nero; Ulpinus, the surname of Trajan; or the names of the popes Benedict, or Sylvester, and lastly Lewis. Now time indeed has set aside most of the foregoing expositions, but should we condemn those who, with a pious mind, would attempt to explain the word of God by the circumstances of their time? It is the sure mark of a good Christian to love the appearance of Christ. And under the scorn of it there often lies concealed the wish there might be no coming again of Christ. They only deserve our just reproach who, blind to the magnificent contents of our book, would simply and only satisfy their curiosity out of it.

The following remarks may contribute somewhat to a more correct exposition:—

- 1.) The book is prophetic, i. 19, and contains, after the dedication and description of the divine appearance, chap. i. 4, prophecies on the future. But as

these should have begun immediately to receive fulfilment, so the larger portion must have been fulfilled long since the time of John. This position is generally acknowledged. Hence the fulfilment must be searched after in history, and the more exactly the historical statement corresponds with the prophecy in that proportion is the exposition valuable. Much, and at least the three last chapters remain unfulfilled. On a comparison of this with the Old Testament prophecies of the same, there is understood, that here events only are predicted which had an influence on the kingdom of God, the most important in man's view being passed over. The first look into the book of Revelation will show, that it foretells not merely fragments of the history of the kingdom of God, as most prophets of the Old Testament do, but it will disclose the completion of the divine kingdom.

- 2.) The prophecies of this book are veiled in images, wherein nothing is more guarded against, than that any one should take the images for the thing itself. The book has even given us instruction whereby to explain its figurative parts, as Jesus also explained his parables; for example, on the stars and lamps, i. 20, on the lamb with seven horns and eyes, v. 6, the incense, viii. 3, on the heads and horns of the beast, xvii. 9, concerning the waters whereon the whore sitteth, xvii. 15, and the Lamb's wife, xix. 7—8; in like manner must the other figures also be explained. They are in part borrowed from the history of the Jewish people, which is for the most part a type of the kingdom of God, partly they resemble the sensible figures which the prophets bring forward, and partly they are set forth under the covering of the historical occurrences of that time. On the other hand, these are so different from the picturesque representation of the prophets, that they form an intimate connection, whilst the former stand only isolated.

3.) In the explanation of these we are not left to our discretionary views of the matter. The figures in the Revelation are for the most part strange to us, as also the matters to which they refer; whosoever reads these the first time finds himself altogether in a new world. Here no capricious exposition is permitted; we must rather conceive ourselves as in the time of John, and think that these sayings were plain and intelligible to his first readers, from the prophets of the Old Testament. In these, as well as the many unintelligible portions in general, we have to seek the solution in the Old Testament.

The following list contains the most important, but not all the references of this book to the Old Testament.

- i. 4. Which is, and which was, and which was to come. Ex. iii. 13.
Seven spirits, Isa. xi. 2. Zech. iv. 10, &c.
5. Kings and priests. Ex. xix. 6.
7. He cometh with clouds. Dan. vii. 13.
They have pierced him. Zech. xii. 10.
8. I am the Alpha and Omega. Isa. xli. 4; xlv. 6; xlviii. 12.
13. The Son of Man. Dan. vii. 13, with Dan. x. 5.
- 14, 15. Description of a bodily form. Dan. vi. 10.
16. A two-edged sword. Isa. xlix. 2.
Brightness of its appearance. Book of Judgment, v. 31.
17. I fell at his feet. Dan. viii. 18.
20. Angel as a teacher. Malachi ii. 7.
- ii. 7. Tree of life. Gen. ii. 9.
14. Balaam and Balac. Num. xxxi. 16.
17. Manna. Ex. xvi. 4.
Witness and a new name. Num. ch. xxvi.
20. Jezebel. 1 Kings xvi. 31.
21. Comparison of idolatry with fornication. Ezek. chap. xvi. and xxiii.
27. To rule with a rod of iron, Ps. ii. 9.

- iii. 3—4. Defiled and white garments. Zech. iii. 4—5.
 7. Key of David. Isa. xxii. 22.
- iv. 1. A seat in heaven. Dan. vii. 9; v. 2. A throne in heaven. Ezek. i. 26; vi. 8. Description of four living creatures. Ezek. i. 5. Isa. vi. 3.
- v. 1. A sealed book. Deut. xxxii. 34.
 Written on within and without. Ezek. ii. 9.
 5. Lion of the tribe of Judah. Gen. xlix. 9, 10.
 The root of David. Isa. xi. 1.
 6. A lamb as it had been slain. Isa. liii. 7.
 Horns and eyes. Zech. iv. 10.
 8. Golden vials full of odours. Ex. xxvii. 3.
- vi. 1—7. The four different horses. Zech. vi. 2, 3, 9. The souls of the martyrs at the altar. Levit. iv. 7.
- vii. 3. Sealing the servants of God. Ezek. ix. 4.
- viii. 5. The casting of fire from the altar. Ezek. x. 1—5. Isa. vi. 6.
 7. Hail with fire. Ex. ix. 23—25.
 8—11. The following plagues. Ex. vii. 20; xv. 23; x. 21. On the third part. Zech. xiii. 8—9.
- ix. 3—10. A description of locusts. Joel ii. 4.
- x. 4. Sealing up. Dan. xii. 8—9.
 5—10. The eating and sweet taste of the book. Ezek. ii. 8; iii. 1—3.
- xi. 1. Measuring reed. Ezek. xl. 3.
 4. The two candlesticks and olive trees. Zech. iv. 3.
 5. The miracles connected with these. Exodus vii. 19—20; ix. 14.
 15. The kingdoms of the world. Dan. ii. 44.
- xii. 3. The beast with heads and horns. Dan. vii. 7.
 4. The devouring dragon. Jer. li. 34.
 7. Combat of Michael and the dragon. x. 13; xii. 1.
 14. The three and a half times. Dan. vii. 25; xii. 7.
- xiii. 3. Mouth speaking blasphemies. Dan. vii. 8.
 18. Number of the beast. Dan. v. 26.
- xvi. 13. Spirits like frogs. Ex. viii. 3—7.

16. Armageddon. Zech. xii. 11.
 xviii. This whole chapter is to be compared with
 Isaiah chap. xxiii. and xxiv. and xxxvii. and
 xlvi. Jer. chap. 1., Ezek. chap. xxvi. xxvii.
 xx. 8. Gog and Magog. Ezek. xxxviii.—xxxix.
 xxi. 1. A new heaven and earth. Isa. lxxv. 17 ; lxxvi. 22.
 2. New Jerusalem. Ezek. xl. 48. Isa. liv. 11—12.
 12. The twelve gates. Ezek. xlviii. 31.
 19. The twelve precious stones of the wall. Exod.
 xxviii. 17.
 23. Sun and moon no longer. Isa. lx. 10.
 xxii. 1. The stream. Ezek. chap. xlvii.

By these parallels we find ourselves at home in the circle of the representations of the book. But the exposition thereof is not yet completed, for John often includes in his words a profounder meaning, and notwithstanding all the plain resemblances, there was frequently implied some small difference of meaning. On that account we are not to view the Revelation as a mere compilation of phrases taken from the Old Testament, but must rather consider it as a work, in which the spirit of prophecy breathes in a still more lively way than in all the prophetic writings of the Old Testament.

4.) But a comparison with the prophecies of our Lord contributes still more to the illustration of our book. John had received the promise that he should not die until the Lord should come, John xix. 35 ; and he lived to witness his coming in the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus had given significant intimations concerning his future coming here and there, and, in particular, a short time before his death, which we find here more fully brought forward. The following list illustrates this :

- i. 7 and 13. The Son of Man in the clouds. Matth. xxii. 8 ; xxiv. 42—51 ; Matt. xxv. 1—13.
 v. 1. By the sealed book we are reminded as to the assurance given by Jesus of the determination of the time. Mark xiii. 32.
 vi. 1—8. The four plagues were declared by Jesus as the beginning and tokens of sorrow.

- Matth. xxiv. 6, 7; Luke xxi. 7, 11. The scarcity intimated v. 6, was foretold also by another prophet Agabus. Acts xi. 28.
- vi. 11. The measure of sin and blood shed must yet first be full. Matth. xxiii. 35—37.
12. The sixth seal was prophesied of by Jesus. Luke xxi. 25—28.
- vii. 3. The sealing of the elect promised by Jesus. Matth. xxiv. 31. Luke xviii. 7, 8.
- viii. 5. Thunder as a token of granting. John xii. 29.
13. The miracles of the second beast. Matth. xxiv. 24.
- xiv. 15. The harvest. Matth. xiii. 37. 43.
- xvi. 15. The unexpected coming of the Lord. Mark xiii. 33—37.
- xix. 7. The marriage of the Lamb. Matth. xxii. 2; xxv. 10.
9. The invited to the supper of the Lamb. Luke xiv. 16.
- xx. 4. Saints reigning with Christ. Matth. xix. 28.

An exact discrimination as to the import of words and phrases contributes exceedingly to an exposition of our book. An old commentator has observed, that almost every word seems to have been first tried in the balance, so exactly is it adapted to its place. And what must command our serious consideration here is the frequent repetition of the number seven. There are seven epistles, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials of wrath. The three last sevens present the peculiar features that they divide into four and three. Seven in the sacred Scriptures is the number of perfection, and has been made a sacred number by the history of the creation; upon it rests the division of the year into weeks, and the year of freedom and jubilee. It is farther remarkable, that always the most weight has been placed on the seventh. The seventh epistle is the sharpest, the seventh seal was first prepared by the sealing of the elect, and celebrated through a silence in heaven. Its contents are no other than the

seven trumpets. The last of these, again, was introduced by the swearing of the angel, and other circumstances, x. 1—7, and its meaning is highly important. It comprehends the signs of the woman, the dragon, the beast, and ends with the seven vials of wrath, amid which the last is the most important; so all hang together most exactly, and form together as the links of a chain. There is one call through the entire book: The Lord cometh. The remaining matters also correspond together exactly; the Lamb and the Dragon, the New Jerusalem and Babylon, the Whore and the Lamb's Wife.

6.) In the explanation of the book, the numbers have presented a peculiar difficulty. Several of them rest on the number 7, *ex. gr.* as the half, $3\frac{1}{2}$ days xi. 9, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ times, xii. 14. Since then *time* here signifies a year, the 42 months, xi. 2, xiii. 5, are just the same, viz. a half of 7 years, and the 1260 days also amount to the same period (xii. 6, and xi. 3), when the month is reckoned of 30 days, according to the division that then prevailed. Some other definitions of time besides appear, namely, 5 months, ix. 10, and 1 year 1 month 1 day, xi. 15, and 1000 years, xx. 2. The comparison of the passages adduced, with one another, shews also that the months during which Jerusalem should be trodden down by the heathen coincide with the time of the beast out of the sea; and the days of the two witnesses with the days of the woman. How then are we to consider these times? Several of them are so circumstantial, that nothing more or less than common years, months, and days, can be denoted by them. Even Bengelius recognises as such the 42 months of the treading down of the city: the 1260 days of the two witnesses, the 3 days and a-half of their lying upon the street. In the entire book, moreover, he finds no trace of other days and years being signified. Since then, in addition to this, the following most important numbers, viz. the 42 months of the beast, and the 1260 days of the woman, coincide with those mentioned above, a great part of interpreters agree in

assuming common years and months as they were reckoned in John's time. In this view, which agrees best with the words of Revelation, it must be remarked, that on account of the shortness of the periods, all which is contained in the first 19 chapters, must have been fulfilled very early, even in the days of John himself. Hence arises a difficulty of another kind, which will be explained in the following remarks. Others, who discovered in our book a survey of political and ecclesiastical history united, must have naturally found in the numbers, far greater intervals of time. They had recourse to different modes of exposition. Sometimes they believed that *definite* times were put generally for *indefinite*, a view which cannot be approved, for this reason, that John himself often adduces *indefinite* times, vii. 11 ; xii. 12 ; xx. 2, and consequently would have expressed himself indefinitely here also, if he had not designed to define an actual period. Others found in the numbers, *prophetic* periods, and proposed their relation to the others as 360 to 1, *i. e.* they reckoned a prophetic day as a common year. From this view Bengel has departed, whose system of time is the following.

- a.) The number of the beast, xiii. 18 : 666 denotes just as many common years.
- b.) These 666 common years last as long as the 42 (prophetic) months (xiii. 5.) during which the beast continues out of the sea.
- c.) Since the number 666 during which the beast prevails, is related to the 1000 years, during which the pious prevail, there are still wanting $\frac{2}{3}$, in order to complete the latter $\frac{6}{9}$, or $\frac{2}{3}$.
- d.) Suppose now I set 666 $\frac{6}{9}$ years in proportion to 42 months, I find the following result :
1 prophetic day is equal to 190 $\frac{10}{1}$ common days, or about $\frac{1}{2}$ a year and 14 days, or, more correctly, 21 prophetic days are equal to 4000 usual ones.
- e.) The 666 $\frac{2}{3}$ years begin with the time when the Pope was completely independent of the city of Rome and the Emperor, and called himself ex-

clusively *Papa*; or, in other words, with the reign of Gregory VIIth. Consequently they continue from 1073—1740, or, if we assume another commencing point, from 1143—1809.

f.) By this are also explained the following numbers:—

a.) Chap. ix. 5. The five (prophetic) months during which the locusts torment men, are equal to the 79 years of persecution in Persia, 510—589.

b.) Chap. ix. 15. The armed horsemen torment mankind 1 year, 1 month, 1 day, or 207 years. The extension of the Arabians, 629—836.

c.) Chap. xii. 6. The woman in the wilderness 1260 days, the Bohemian church before the Reformation, equal to 657 years, consequently from 864—1517 (Bengel afterwards changed the reckoning into 940—1617)

g.) On the contrary, the key hitherto applied is not sufficient to resolve the following times:

xii. 12. The little time of Satan.

xii. 14. 1 time, 2 time, $\frac{1}{2}$ time, of the woman.

Bengel discovers from the relation of the more nearly defined times $666\frac{6}{9}$ and $999\frac{9}{9}$ (= 1000; and the number seven, that a time comprehends $222\frac{2}{9}$, and half a time $111\frac{1}{9}$ years.

From this it follows:

a.) xii. 14. A time of the woman which takes place about 100 years after her flight into the wilderness is 1058—1280. Two times of the woman 1280—1725, half a time of the woman 1725—1836, making together $777\frac{7}{9}$ years.

b.) xii. 12. The little time of Satan must, according to the nature of the thing, have been somewhat longer than the time of the woman, consequently about $888\frac{8}{9}$ years.

This little time begins, when it is said to coincide with the other times, 947, and continues till 1836.

Whoever has read Bengel's writings knows how

little he had to do with the mere satisfying of an idle curiosity, what pure biblical notions he entertained of the state of the thousand years' reign, and how much admonition he gave not to speculate uselessly, but to grow and abide in Christianity.

7.) It would contribute much to the explanation of our book, could we ascertain the time of its composition; but John has given an account only of the place, but not of the time when it was written, i. 9. And we can gather the matter only from the book itself, as the ancient Fathers were of different opinions concerning it. It was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, which it has predicted, and probably when the Christians were persecuted, i. 9. When, perhaps, Nero had assailed the Christians, and the Jewish war, with all its terrific circumstances, had broken out in the 64th and 65th years after the birth of Christ. After the foregoing remarks, it is now time that we should proceed to the explanation of the book itself. Modern interpreters are divided chiefly into two views. According to one view, the prophetic portions of this book have described only the downfall of Jerusalem and the Roman empires; according to the other, they signify not only these, but all also who, from that period to the end, will be enemies to the people of God. The abettors of both views have taken surprising trouble to show the conformity in the events, as recorded in history, to the description and dates given in this book. Notwithstanding the many excellencies which distinguish that mode of exposition, according to which this prophecy was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the fall of the Roman empire, Matt. xxiv. 21; it seems to have pointed at the same time to more remote events. It is hard also to prove, that only that, or particular occurrences in the history of the world, are the only events described in this book. To avoid these difficulties, inquiry has gone two steps farther. The first consists in assuming, that, by the terms Jerusalem and Rome, are signified, not only the cities called by these names, but

that Jerusalem signifies also Judaism, and the New Jerusalem, Christianity. This exposition was certainly more conformable to the sublime and important phraseology of the book, and one step more was necessary to complete the exposition. This consists in the farther assumption, that Revelation refers chiefly to these two occurrences, and describes them according to their particular circumstances and times; but in general it denotes by the same, the struggle of the kingdom of light with the kingdom of darkness, and especially the last times of the world are typified by representations, which proceed from these occurrences. Herder, in particular, discovered this to be the meaning of the passage, in his *Maranatha*, the best book which has yet been written on the Revelation. According to this view, there is here a twofold prophecy; first of all concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and to which even the features in the prophecy most surprisingly correspond, and then to the last times, of which the destruction of Jerusalem was a type in miniature. The ground on which it can be alleged, that two events apparently so different, nevertheless have a close connexion, arises from the circumstance, that Jesus alleged a similitude between the two events, *Matth. xxiv. 25*. Then he has also set in a proper point of view, the idea of the future coming of Christ. Some represent his coming after the manner of men, as in the far distance, which view is not wholly conformable with the promise of Christ, according to which he is to remain with his people to the end of the world. No, he is continually near to us, and so far as he has been efficaciously near to us, in that degree he has already come to us. Hence it has been said of the eternal Word of God, who has also assumed human nature: He came to his own, *John i. 11*; and when Jesus would describe the intimate fellowship with believers, which he condescends now to have in his state of exaltation, invisible to us, he says, Behold I stand at the door and knock, and enter in. Accordingly, Jesus is ever coming for each individual,

as for all. But we speak of an outward efficacious coming of the Lord to manifest his love to his people, and righteous judgment against his enemies. It has been shown that four advents of this kind are spoken of:

- 1.) His incarnation, and course of life among men in the form of a servant.
- 2.) The righteous judgment on Jerusalem.
- 3.) The completion of the church through the total overthrow of all antichristian opposition.
- 4.) The general judgment.

On this we have to observe, that the first, second, and fourth coming, have not been doubted by the larger number of Christians; many, however, have blended with the fourth, the notifications of Scripture concerning the third, though these are represented apart from each other by the interval of more than one thousand years. As now the third hath so much similitude with the second, and is different from it, only in so much as it would be a judgment upon a world lying in wickedness, and a deliverance to all Christians; whilst the second delivered only the Christians in the land of Judea, and had chastised their enemies; so it can not surprise us, that as the third was to be like to the second, so at a future day again the fourth would resemble the third. The outward circumstances of these may be different, they all have the same kernel and essence. The union of the church with her head vanishes, the ties of love and peace naturally dissolve, then follow outward troubles, the sword of the enemy, hunger, pestilence. Where the carcase is, there the eagles gather together; this is confirmed, as well by the experience of individual man, as by that of the whole church. Every such providence is only a real prophecy of the last greatest judgment. Perhaps it may interest the reader, to read here in miniature the view of one of our most renowned and learned divines, as it is recorded in Bengel's Archives, Vol. V. p. 285—332.

Chap. i.—v. Introduction. Chap. vi. Though the

commotions were great which moved the world at the commencement of Christianity, so that the victory of Christianity was apparently certain; nevertheless, it was the divine purpose, that the Christians who succeeded that age had to make many sacrifices, and to stand many hard conflicts. Divine chastisements, indeed, would be made to fall upon Christians, but these, instead of leading men to serious thought, would much rather bring many into a doubting state. Chap. vii.—Notwithstanding these occurrences, the genuine followers of Christ would not be wholly exterminated, a church must always remain upon the earth; during this period the Christians already dead would be in the enjoyment of celestial happiness. Chap. viii.—ix. When, after a long course of time, the most zealous admonitions might have turned many to God, and an increase of zeal have constrained many to turn to God, nevertheless great multitudes would continue in a hardened, unconverted state. Chap. x. Under all these circumstances, a crisis was certain, and matters would surely and unavoidably prepare for it. Chap. xi. Christianity is acknowledged by many, only in a mere outward manner, whilst by a small number it is held in truth. God has wisely ordered that the truth should be preached with effect, and though it would meet with such determined opposition, that for a short period it would seem as extinguished, yet it would soon revive again under circumstances which would affright its enemies. The witnesses, signify the strivings of evangelical teachers during this mixed condition of the people of God, then towards the end the voice of truth would be crushed, but God would meanwhile so care for it, that it would soon again flourish with renewed energy. Thus far, matters are described rather in a general way. The following chapters, xii.—xix. contain no later occurrences than in the preceding, but only more exact development of the matters already mentioned; and certainly from xii. to xvi. there is a more exact picture of what is given from vi.—xi. and in the

xvii. a more particular description of what we have in the xvi. The xix. of what we have from the xviii. to xix. from the xvi.—xxi. we have a more vivid representation of the xvi.

Chap. xii. The Devil had already assailed Judaism, (the woman clothed with the sun,) particularly as she had produced Christianity (given birth to a child), but the full destruction thereof must be prevented by the invisible power, under whose shade it continues, (the flight of the woman into the wilderness), but now he assails Christianity in every possible way.

Chap. xiii. Besides, an earthly power now becomes equipped, which should help him with all its powers; and it gives itself to the support of paganism, whereby Christians would be deprived of their civil privileges. (The beast arising out of the sea is a political power; the deadly wound, but which was soon healed again, signifies that he would recover, and again be able to make the most deadly attacks. The other beast is a new kind of religion which this power serves.)

Chap. xiv.—xv. All who fall victims to the vengeance of this power, come to Jesus. Warning not to be partakers in its punishment.

Chap. xvi. A new series of divine chastisements. Chap. xvii. shows what must precede before the deliverance of the temporal power, as an instrument of the Devil, could be expected. It would before conclude a covenant of a peculiar kind. It is considered that this power has assumed seven different forms, (throughout the book the number seven is significant of somewhat indeterminate,) during one of these forms of government, would be a spurious Christianity; a church devoted to vain observances (the whore), that would know to bring the temporal power called (the beast), to dependence on her; so that it would, as it were, disappear when the temporal and spiritual power united like in a new relation, would be considered as an eighth monarchy, yet would the temporal power regain courage, and lay in ruin the spiritual power. As we again meet with a false prophet in her train,

so it is to be expected that the political power would again go into the service of an antichristian religion. Chap. xviii.—xix. Now through Christ this power would fall.

Chap. xx. A description of Christianity no more injured, during a long period of time. After the expiration of this period, the Devil indeed would try once more to shake it, but his attack would prove his weakness. Then comes the resurrection of the dead, and the general judgment.

Whilst this exposition has visibly omitted particular lineaments of this prophecy, at the same time it has passed over the time at which it should be fulfilled. It sets forth, on the other hand, the more general truths of Christianity in a more lucid point of view. Instead of a picture in detail, in which so many already have deceived themselves, be it sufficient for us to set forth some striking outlines, in respect of which we are less liable to be mistaken.

Besides what John in the Revelation says of the last times, has, in its principal contents, a similitude with many other portions of the Bible, these serve to explain it, in like manner it imparts light to them. It is worth the trouble to set the plainest of those portions side by side with the statement of the Revelation. Thereby we must feel as to the complete accordance of the sacred writers, respecting this doctrine; besides, it will help us to have a clear view of the church itself. By this, on the one side, the ardent desire of Christians after a more perfect state of things, would be cherished and defined; on the other side, it would be calmed in hope. In the question which, in troublous times, presses itself: Lord how long? It furnishes a consoling answer; each finds a call to examine the signs of his time, and the most pressing admonition, to remain true in the service of the Lord till he come;—in one word, the design which the Revelation of John is designed to have, in respect of thinking readers, would thereby be best attained unto

We set together the picture of the last times, in the following fifteen points:—

1.) Forebodings of the last time, Matth. xxiv. 7—14; xiii. 29—30. 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. Mark xiii. 8. Luke xvii. 26—28; xxi. 25. 2 Peter iii. 3—4. In the course of centuries, good and evil grow side by side with each other, until both have reached the highest pitch, and concentrated themselves, whereby the separation would be facilitated. A great confusion, proceeding from the progress of injustice, prevails both in church and state, and likewise in the appearances of outward nature itself. The bonds of peace in the church are become loose; the love of many has waxed cold; false prophets, in part such as were self-deceived, and partly open deceivers, appear and deceive many, believers would not only be hated, but also persecuted. Besides, on all sides, wars and rumours of wars, and insurrections are heard of; people stand against people in warlike attitude, and, as they have been called to execute divine judgments, they fall upon each other with murderous weapons. To make the measure of misery full, there follow, in addition to these, pestilence, famine, and earthquakes; the sea and the billows thereof roar, the powers of the heavens are shaken, men quake for fear, and from the reports of the things which are coming.

2.) Conversion of many Jews and Gentiles. Zech. xii. 10. Matth. viii. 11; xxiv. 14. Rev. vii. 4—8. Then, as the evil increases, and embroils the whole condition of the world, so the good had gained new power. The miseries of this period, and the persecutions, cause, indeed, many nominal Christians to fall away; but they tend to purification of the true believers. Whilst many false confessors of Christianity, because of the outward assaults, are made to renounce it, the overwhelming power of the gospel, by the united labours of Christians, has been announced in the most distant lands, and has shown itself at this time in the most glorious manner. Whilst the weapons of

the enemy rage tremendously, at the same time the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is victorious. But it is not to be expected that at this time, every individual of that people would be drawn to Christianity; it suffices, that the gospel has been preached unto all for a witness unto them, Matth. xxiv. 14. In the ready reception, or perverse rejection thereof, each individual expresses his own sentence.

3.) Appearing of Antichrist. Mark xiii. 6; xxi. 22; Matth. xxiv. 25. John v. 43. Already among the forebodings of the last time, false prophets would have arisen, but the Antichrist would be far more atrocious and dangerous. These had left the honour of Christ unimpeached, and sinned only in so far as they deceitfully gave themselves out for his servants, and circulated false doctrines in his name. But the Antichrist, proceeding out of the church, and abandoning it, perhaps giving himself out for Christ, would fight against the whole Christian church, and even the person of Christ. The many deceivers who have arisen among the Jews since the time of Christ, and given themselves out to be the true Messiah, it is reckoned there were fifty of these, among which the most renowned and mischievous was Barchochebas,—are only faint presages of the Antichrist of the last time. An earlier appearance was not possible, as the evil would not sooner have reached its highest measure. But then his appearing would eminently serve to a great separation of the godly and the ungodly. Lisco excellently says concerning him: “The great and pervading division of the last time, was to come to a stand, particularly as Antichrist would appear and show the most powerful efficiency. At present it cannot be determined, whether he should be a single person or a series of persons, or be an earthly power; but, according to the intimations concerning this power given in the Holy Scriptures, it would seek to raise itself to universal dominion by craft and violence; through lies and fraud, signs and wonders, it would be efficacious in the highest degree, in overthrowing

Christianity; it would claim to itself divine authority, selfishness, and the most unbounded love of dominion would characterize him; and he would, at the time of his coming, be a centre of union and attachment to all the ungodly on earth, whether in the church or without the church; and whilst he combines in himself all which is opposed to the divine life, light, and love of Christ, so there would come thereby a necessary and visible point of separation, and at which every one would turn this or that way, as he should feel constrained by a divine or opposite power.

4.) The kingdom of Antichrist. 2 Thess. ii. 3—4. Rev. chap. xi. 13, 17, 19. To his subjects belong all the many who have revolted from Christianity. He, even the man of sin, and child of corruption, raiseth himself above all that is called of God, is divine, also he sitteth in the temple of God, giving himself out that he is God. He openeth his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. It would be given him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. A false prophet is his most intimate partisan, who, by great craft and lying wonders, seduces men to submission under him. At first he appears in some connection with corrupt Christians, though at the same time he hates them. Rev. xvii. 3—16; but he soon manifests his resentment against them in full current, and destroys them. They were, at first, useful to his purpose, but when he had reached his elevation, he destroys those who had helped to raise him to it. Besides, his kingdom would be visited by many public calamities, xvi. 1—21. Notwithstanding he undertakes with great armies an expedition against the Christians who had remained true amid all persecutions, and by these Christians would be purified. Rev. xvi. 16; xix. 19.

5.) Signs of the Son of Man. Matt. xxiv. 30. Rev. xiv. 14. Notwithstanding all the great dangers to which they are exposed, the Christians are not terrified; for they have not only observed the general

presages of the coming of the Lord, viz. wonderful appearances in the sun, moon, and stars, agitation of the powers of heaven, but they now also see the sign of the Son of Man in the clouds; wherein this which immediately precedes His coming is to consist, we cannot possibly determine before the event, sufficient for us to know it will be really visible to all, and so manifest, that there will be no room for any to doubt the reality of the fact. Matth. xxiv. 27.

6.) The second visible manifestation of Jesus, (if this be reckoned according to the order already given, it was the third; but as the coming of Christ to the destruction of Jerusalem did not imply a visible manifestation of Christ, so now the following is properly called the second visible manifestation,) Matth. xxiv. 30. Acts. i 6—7; iii. 19—21. Heb. ix. 28. Rev. xix. 11—21.^a

In the moment of greatest danger, when human help is impossible, when the enemy has believed he

^a Against the views of Dr. Gess, on the last time, in sections 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, we feel one great objection; that he explains the passages quoted here, literally; in our judgment they are to be taken figuratively, and signify, that at a certain period in the progress of Christianity, the cause of Christ will be manifested in great power, (this the import of what he calls "the second visible manifestation of Jesus") every thing anti-Christian will experience a signal overthrow, the spirit of the martyrs will again revive, (this the import of what he designates the first resurrection), and this state will continue for a long period, signified by 1000 years. Dr. Gess's explanation proceeds on the supposition that passages, unquestionably figurative, are to be explained literally. The passages quoted in sections 1 and 2, refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, and were presages of that event.

As unfulfilled prophecy can never be accurately expounded but on its completion, it becomes expositors of such matters to be very diffident, and far from dogmatism. We question much whether Dr. Gess has been sufficiently cautious in this respect, however, his views are ingenious, and breathe the same devout spirit which animates the book. The passages concerning the Millenium must be interesting to the reader, as giving the views of many foreign divines on this interesting era. — *Translator.*

could blot out Christianity, the Lord appears to the deliverance of his church. Now sorrow and anguish disappear; the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord is come. He appears visibly on the clouds of heaven, (on a white horse as the Revelation says) as the Son of Man in his glorified body, and accompanied by his saints. To be sure the design of his ever coming is not the last judgment of the world, but the deliverance and completion of his church; meanwhile the nature of the matter brings with it preliminary subordinate judgment. For the saints would now be delivered from all the miseries whose oppressive weight they have felt particularly in the last time; separated from the fellowship of the wicked, in fellowship with the purified servants of the Lord, they experience sin no longer in its oppressive power. On the other hand, the antichristian being would be so lamed by the blow, that he cannot any longer be in a condition for mischief for the period of a thousand years. Now is seen why the Lord of the church had permitted it, that he had concentrated himself in the last time. Now also has been made manifest his utter incorrigibleness, and it is time that in place of long-suffering forbearance, righteous judgment should be manifested. At the same time, with the appearance of the Lord are to take place the first resurrection, the transformation of the pious then alive, the renovation of the earth, the commencement of the reign of a thousand years.

7.) First resurrection, or the resurrection of the saints, Matth. xxiv. 31. John v. 29; vi. 39. Luke xx. 36. 1 Cor. xv. 23. Phil. iii. 11. 1 Thess. iv. 16. Rev. xx. 4. According to these passages, the saints then dead, on the appearance of Christ, are to be organised again with the material bodies. Also this is to take place a thousand years before the awakening of the other dead, the souls of such as had been put to death for the testimony of Jesus and his word, and who had not taken upon them the mark of the beast or his image; all such are to reside again upon

the earth, and to live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. Happy the saints who have a part in the first resurrection, over them death has no power; but they would be priests of God and Christ, and reign with him a thousand years. How important this doctrine is, the following remarks by Lavater may show:—“How inexpressibly animating to the best exercise of our moral powers must this idea be, to be a thousand years and more sooner in the enjoyment of the full fruition of the blessed. So much earlier—a thousand years earlier to have enjoyed personal fellowship with the lovely Saviour, and the noblest of the whole human family; along with Jesus, the prophets and apostles, to superintend the immediate concerns of the Godhead; to be a living witness of the unchangeable truth and faithfulness of God, to the man who, amid all the allurements to unbelief had believed and obeyed; to be busied in the perfecting of the elect, and therewith to the highest happiness of many thousands for ever; with firm bold step, with elevated breast, to go into the open eternity; with strong look into the dark immensity to behold the expressible beatitudes; to be already raised together with Christ on the great morning of the general judgment, over death and the grave, and to be occupied in the judgment of the world; to shine opposite the families of those rising from the dead, and among the unnumbered millions of the heavenly inhabitants; to assemble the saints to themselves, and to bear for ever over them a free fraternal moral dominion; that is a happiness which no other than an insensible creeping soul can view with unconcern, and can think unworthy of his most zealous strivings.”

Equally excellent are the sayings of Herder:—“The day of the Lord is come. There now his beloved are with him, and as these had died, as many of them, on his account, had endured a violent death, and waited for him so long, and were matured, accordingly the first awakening from the dead takes place with them,—they who give away their life receive

it sooner, they are placed beforehand on their measure of elevation and reward. They already labour, when others yet sleep; they reign with Christ; they, as his old associates, now bring the disordered earth to order, the abuses of their fatherland, and to which they owed their violent death, into harmony and repose; they would all be brought glorious and efficacious to be dukes and bearers of his salvation, to his eternal work, to the accomplishment of the designs of his kingdom."

8.) Transformation of all the godly yet alive, 1 Thess. iv. 17. 2 Thess. i. 10. 1 Cor. xv. 51—52, all would not be fallen asleep. All the godly, alive at this time, will be changed, according to the similitude of the first resurrection, and made to meet the Lord in the clouds; so they without having been made subject to death, will be made partakers of the state of the raised again.

9.) Renewal of the earth, Matth. viii. 11—12. Rom. viii. 18—21. Heb. ii. 5. 2 Peter iii. 13. On this occasion the earth also would be transformed, though not so completely as at the time of the general judgment, yet so that the curse of sin would be made to retire from it. The redeeming office of Christ is always unfolded the more. Already some are ransomed from the misery of sin, and through the resurrection and change from the state of the dead; now also outward nature becomes a sharer in the blessings of redemption. Freed from the servitude of a perishable being, the risen enjoy a paradisaical habitation. Its restoration and glorification are necessary, insomuch as glorified beings are to walk upon it.

10.) The reign of one thousand years, Matth. viii. 11. Luke xiii. 25—28; xviii. 29—30. Matth. xix. 28. Rev. xx. 4—6.

Perhaps many readers will feel astonishment at the views we have already set forth respecting the last times, and put the question, if it be possible now to set forth such antiquated notions. What the Bible

teaches, never can become antiquated, notwithstanding all the doubts which may have been raised, and misconceptions respecting it; it may become as it were covered with dust, but cannot be considered antiquated. The truth only requires to be set forth in its biblical purity, it shines forth in its original clearness, and meets an accordance in every susceptible heart.

On no subject of Christianity, perhaps, is this more the case than on that respecting the reign of a thousand years. It need only be considered in its true light, its inward truth bursts forth, and on the ground of Christianity it seems natural and necessary, as, when contemplated by cultivated reason, it appears fair and elevated. Indeed many have considered the idea of the reign of a thousand years not a plainly determined conception: they considered it a view which had been embraced, because it served to appease favourite wishes; others again have considered it as an opinion wholly ridiculous, and have tried, as far as in their power, to turn it into ridicule: on the one side and the other, a false position has been given to the truth, which continues notwithstanding eternal truth. From the confusion of ideas, and the want of precision which has prevailed on this subject, many readers may embrace the prejudiced view, that to set this subject in its proper light, we are only to paint the biblical conception in its beauty, and to idealize it. To set aside this conception, it is only necessary that the views of some Christian thinkers of ancient and modern times be set before the reader.

Herder: "The derided misconceived thousand years are the undetermined symbolical number of the last sabbath of the earth, when that state will really have taken place, to which the good of all time tends, when the light will shine as at the beginning of time, and the darkness be confined to a little corner. The noble of the human race, united together in a place which God has made for them, in harmony will en-

joy their reward, the fruit of all troubles and times. Holy and happy is he who has a part in this issue of all times, under the pressure of all times he is calm, and looks to this happy future. To him will occur the proverb, in order to the happiness of the world its philosophers must be kings, and its kings philosophers. Here Christ and his saints are more than both, priests of God, deliverers of the earth."

Steudel : " A complete victory will have been gained, by the ever unfolding divine power of Christianity over the opposing power of darkness (Rev. xix. 20). Then will have come to pass the period, when the influences of Christianity in forming the relations of life, and which had been hindered by opposing influences, will have gained a complete ascendant, set forth under the image of the devil bound a thousand years in hades. Then humanity will appear in all that state of true cultivation which Christianity, whilst able to manifest its whole vital power, is able to impart to it. These are the salutary fruits of Christianity upon the earth (Rev. xx. 3), these are the much-spoken of thousand years, during which all the witnesses of Christ and truth, who had been already dead, are to enjoy with Christ celestial happiness ; (a thousand years in the Revelation is viewed as a whole, and set forth as a prescribed period : in its real acceptance, it is a long undetermined time.) A look into the future through the sure promises, leads us to understand, that the earth will yet furnish a habitation to improved humanity, it having attained unto a glorious consummation by a hard conflict."

Olshausen on Matth. xxiv. 32, 33, and Luke xxi. 31. " Here we have to conceive of the kingdom of God, in that state, where the return of the Lord, the prevalence of the good, will be distinctly manifest. What since the first coming of the Lord in humiliation manifested itself efficacious during the concealed reign of the spiritual life, and was able to manifest itself outwardly only in a state of comparative weakness, whilst the prevalence of sin was distinctly mani-

fest, on the coming of Christ, this element will prevail over nature, and the world of humanity. Only here, however, it is undeveloped, and has been comprised under a name which, in the Revelation, is significant of entire separation, the kingdom of the saints on the renewed earth, (Rev. xx.) and the new heaven and new earth." Rev. xxi.

J. G. Hess: "The earth would not be changed into a heaven; but as it has been given to be a kingdom of God upon earth, so it would then have attained unto a degree of beauty and dignity, under the guidance of him to whom all power has been committed, both in heaven and in earth, and to which it could not heretofore have attained. As the earth was the theatre of the Saviour's humiliation, it shall, in like manner, be the theatre of his glorification. A state approaches, which, in every respect, will be as perfect as is possible on earth; not a super-terrestrial felicity, but freed from those matters which, through the depravity of man, rendered the earth the theatre of so much suffering, the seat of so much injustice. This earthly creation shall be a seat of harmony, of the largest measure of peace and felicity to which humanity can attain. Under the King of kings righteousness flourishes, every virtue will be rewarded, though even their perfect retribution has not taken place;—should causes inimical to happiness manifest themselves, they will be easily set aside. In this happy state, nature even has become young again, has been renovated to enhance the happiness of the dwellers on earth. The monarch of this so flourishing kingdom, would indeed, as in the days of his resurrection, appear again visibly on earth, when some more important end requires he should; and he will ever set a first value upon all which will tend to the ascendancy of his and his father's purposes above the weaknesses of humanity. Now, as before, difference of language and of worship can become united together, in the composition of the Messiah's kingdom. With the most diligent efforts,

all things could not be brought to one form; many differences not in essentials, will still remain open to free choice. Unity and variety would give every future composition a still higher zest and value. Should the world ever, then, furnish men of malignant mind, as they verily deserve, he would rule them with a sceptre of iron, and constrain them to obedience.”—Lavater: “As often as Jesus spake with his disciples, concerning the kingdom of God, he described it to them, not as is usually believed, as a kingdom wholly spiritual. It should not, indeed, be a worldly kingdom, in the gross sense according to which the depraved Jewish nation expected, not in the sense the Mahometan heaven is represented; it should not appear at the time, and in the manner as men then hoped; but yet there was promised to the Jews (by their prophets) a glorious lasting kingdom upon earth, the enjoyment of which the better portion of their nation would be permitted to possess. This prophecy is yet unfulfilled.”—J. C. Bengel: “The gospel shows itself in full power; Jews and Gentiles had prayed to the Lord; the kingdom is the Lord’s, and the mystery is finished. This state includes many particulars, a fulness of the Spirit, a rich overflowing of the gracious manifestations and workings of God, a holy harmonious service of his people, fruitful lovely times, a great multiplication of the saints, and long life, freedom from many ills which men had heretofore brought on themselves. Notwithstanding, saints would still walk by faith, not by sight; the conflict with sin in the flesh, is not yet taken away; death is not yet (in the part of all) swallowed up in victory. There would yet be many difficulties, though temptations will not be enforced by the influence of Satan. There would be still reigning princes and authorities, but they would associate with their subjects, as brothers. There would continue still the state of marriage, agriculture, and other useful employment; but those which human curiosity, pride, and debauchery had introduced, would be no more.”

J. F. Meyer: "With the Lord's advent, begins the real reign of God upon earth, a kingdom of righteousness, holiness, and peace, consisting of mortals, but with exemption from the Evil One and his enticements, and under a mighty influence of celestial power. It is called the reign of a thousand years, although it may endure more than a thousand years. Modern times have again paid attention to this near approach, thus coinciding with the ancient Fathers. It is resounding, as it were, a new call: 'The Lord cometh!' Among believers, this doctrine, far removed from carnal conceptions, should no more be considered an error; unbelievers but dishonour it, after the annunciation in proof of its truth."

Perhaps what has been stated, has reconciled many a reader with an idea, which, whilst it does not develope itself in every one as a more precise thought, yet must interest every one, when it has been laid before him. It carries its commendation in itself. Completion appears natural and necessary on the ground of Christianity. Whoever once acknowledges a purpose of God, which, beginning in the earliest times, had developed itself in many old directions, he must, because it is a divine purpose, expect it to have a completion. Who once admits in faith, that the Son of God took upon him human nature, and suffered the death of the cross, finds it was important, in reference to that human weakness which must first be instructed and formed accordingly, that the blessings of the incarnation and death of Jesus, should be unfolded only in a gradual manner, but he would, and must necessarily suppose, that these very great measures would, at a time, have the greatest consequences. Hence, also, an acute thinker, when he places himself on the ground of Christianity, a Schleirmacher recognises a completion of the church, a ceasing of its fluctuating growth, which ceasing, he acknowledges, not merely as a fair encouraging ideal, but as a necessary article of the faith, and in accordance with which, he holds this comple-

tion can be brought to pass only by an immediate exercise of the kingly power of Christ.

Perhaps some might object against this view, by saying, the divine plan would, however, be fulfilled in the eternal life, though disorder and the tendency of sin and unbelief should prevail to the end of the world, the sincere followers of Christ would then become happy as they do now, through sanctification under the trials on earth, through conflict with temptations, and in keeping the faith amid an unbelieving world. To such a remark, we may reply on two grounds.

The prophets of the Old Testament have described the kingdom of the Messiah after such a manner, that one sees plainly, they describe it as an institution the most elevated, pure, moral, and conducive to the most rational happiness, but, nevertheless, an earthly kingdom. Whoever, by the kingdom of Christ, understands a bare spiritual dominion of the unseen Saviour, as he exercises it since his ascension, has a view of it wholly foreign to what the prophets have given. But their description as little suits the condition of future happiness beyond death. They paint it as a kingdom full of the knowledge of God, of righteousness and peace, but it would abound at the same time with terrestrial goods. While they describe its moral condition, they show, at the same time, its political relation by way of succession to other nations; they place it as a kingdom in the succession of kingdoms, as a fulfilment of the prophecy which had been given to David, that there would never be wanting to him a descendant to sit on his throne. The Jews could not well understand these prophecies otherwise than they really did understand them, and, as the Christians of the first three centuries conceived them, namely, of an earthly kingdom. Jesus and the apostles at no time deprived them of this idea; they much rather maintain Jesus must come twice; the first time, according to the prediction of his humiliation, and to accomplish his

death, the second time to erect his kingdom, 1 Peter i. 11. Acts iii. 21. Heb. ix. 28. Rom. xi. 25—28. The former coming has taken place, the latter, not. But now God has once conceived a great plan for the happiness of men, and the answer to the question, how far he would carry it out on earth, is not to be given from our inadequate conceptions, it must rather be answered by what its great author has revealed on the subject.

But, besides, this view of an unceasing conflict, which is never to have a termination until the end, stands in opposition to all the perceptions which are submitted to us by growth on earth. It appears to be the universal law of nature, that all things ripen to perfection before they die. From the summer flower, which soon, under all hindrances, soon under all furtherances, unfolds itself, and does not conclude its short life until through its full wreath of flowers it has ravished the eye of the wanderer; from the cedar of Lebanon which, in order to its growth needs as many centuries as man, the crown of creation, does months, there is a constant striving upwards which does not rest until it has reached its high point. What holds of the individual that holds also of entire communities, when they carry in them the germ of life. The history of the world is surety for it, how every people, which has really borne a popular life, had soared up to the highest attainable elevation, perhaps sooner, perhaps later, it then must first have lost this again, when it would ever have become untrue to its better character. Even systems of human philosophy often have had such a growth, and have to enjoy an elevation though of short duration: how much more of the wisdom which comes from above may such ascendancy have been predicted, under his guidance who has brought it from heaven to earth, and who ever unites in his person heaven and earth. It may be conceivable that it stumbles upon many difficulties until it has penetrated the whole of huma-

nity; but it is a divine power, on that account it would penetrate, and when it has penetrated make happy. "Do not all strifes," says Herder, "turn to peace? Does not all confusion strive after harmony and peace? and shall our earth, which in physical nature, is so fair a portion of the kingdom of God, continue for ever, so far as man is concerned, the kingdom of the dragon, an undeveloped inexplicable clew of deadly confusion? If then God, the God of order and of light, who called it out of darkness, and at the end of creation looked with complacency on his work, when he also finds it good, to create also a Sabbath at the end of things, and to enjoy himself in his developed worldly scenes, would he not do then, as he ever has done, through servants, intermediate persons? Would he not permit the noble of the earth to take part with him therein, who were his assistants, his true instruments amid the afflictions of the world, the war of elements? They sowed with him and should they not also reap with him? They prepared before the light, and now when it has broken out should they sleep? They bare their seed weeping, and as their fruit the work of God has become ripened by the years, should they not live with and in him? The best joy is not idle, and surely a heavenly joy would not be such. A spirit must work, arrange, govern, only it must work actively, and work purely, and work happily, that it may see its design, and such is this royal sacerdotal dominion with Christ."

Even on the ground of pure human reason also, this idea is fair and elevated. This conception of a state as it should be, which occupied the noblest spirits of the ancient world, Christianity would present to us here, and indeed not as an empty ideal, but as somewhat which should really take place, through the efficacy of God incarnate, and which mere human power could not accomplish. What other than this hope had inspired the noblest of our race, who stood higher than their age, and because of this were

misconceived by it, to wage a bold opposition to the prejudices of the multitude? All who were actually employed in the service of the church, the state, of science, and of all that promotes human happiness in the largest acceptation of the phrase, who suffered patiently the scorn of their age, and proceeded onward making every personal sacrifice, what other comfort had they than the prospect of the time when the seed should ripen they had sown, when every good action would have reached its design; when he who had lived for humanity would find his reward in the welfare of men? When should this time come? It is manifest that the best of all times have so lived and acted as if they in their time were called to lead and act onward to a golden age. And as levity would have broken through all bounds had men expected the divine chastisements first after the end of many centuries: in like manner would the courageous enterprizer for human weal have halted, and his arm have fallen down, could the weal of man, for which he is striving, be contemplated only at the end of a long range of time. Both require a near prospect, and the prophecies of the holy scriptures, instead of having admonished to watchfulness, would rather have cherished the opposite state, had they directed man's look to the far distant future. Christ would that men should be making ready for his coming every hour, Matt. xxiv. 42. Luke xii. 35. Do we only consider the matter, humanly speaking, every moment it is possible he may come. But on this account the nobler men have neither deceived themselves, nor have the prophecies contributed to their deceiving. For the Lord is ever coming, the history of the world is continually the judgment of the world, and as his enemies of all times, if not the last, had to fear similar judgments; so the servants of Christ always labour in the extension of his kingdom, and in the development of its immanent blessings. What God has permitted to have been accomplished by them, though it is not the completion

of Christ's kingdom, yet it is an approximation to it, and a type of it in a more limited sphere.

11.) The loosing again of the Devil for a short period, at the end of the thousand years. On earth nothing is perfect, nothing of eternal duration. Even this prosperous condition passes away. As once the good increased amidst a world of sin, to such a measure that, under the succour of Christ it had subdued the evil, so now in a good world the evil grows on to the last decisive conflict. The deceitfulness of the devil would seduce for a new thousand years, those who would assemble themselves under his standard. They march from the uttermost parts of the earth and encompass the holy city; yet no fears take possession of the small band of the besieged; who know the help which cometh from on high.

12.) Third visible coming of Christ. Rev. xx. 11. All things are now repeated as on the second coming of the Lord, only in a more elevated measure, and the occurrences which take place now, are no more decisive for a definite period of years but for eternity. Fire from heaven destroys the opposing nations, the devil, who had seduced them, is cast into the lake of fire, where are the beast and the false prophet.

13.) Second general resurrection and the judgment of the world. Rev. xx. 13; xxi. 12—15. Matt. xxv. 31—46. John v. 29. Now all the dead stand up, both small and great. The books are opened, and the dead are judged by the things that are written in the books, according to their works.

14.) Total change of the earth and heaven, Rev. xxi. 1. Isa. lxv. 17; lxvi. 22. Heaven and earth pass away, the latter by fire; a new heaven and new earth arise. The holy city, the new Jerusalem cometh down from heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

15.) Christ lays down his mediatorial office, 1 Cor. xv. 24. Now, after all has been accomplished which was

to be done by the mediatorial office of Jesus ; after he has carried through the whole plan of God to the salvation of men ; after all are saved who could have been saved, and are separated from the evil and made happy ; after to all the ungodly time had been given for repentance, and the impenitent are visited with righteous judgment : Now God incarnate giveth up the kingdom which he had received as man, to his heavenly Father, upon which he is all in all. But his divine dignity is, according to its nature, unchangeable ; he continues for ever the likeness of the Father, and the foundation and author of their happiness who come to God by him.

These remarks may help us to the point of view from which we should consider the Revelation of John: While so many things in this book continue dark, yet an attentive consideration of it will surely lead to the conviction : What I understand of it is excellent, and what I do not understand I take for granted is excellent because of the former.

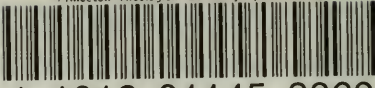
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